

Ford's backflip: Blue Oval to provide limited support to V8 teams

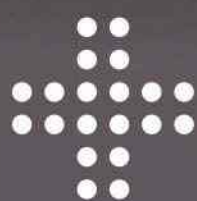
AutoAction

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HEAD TO HEAD

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Different strokes



Two of Australian motorsport's biggest powerbrokers – Warburton and Quinn – discuss the relationship between GT3 and V8 Supercars, writes Cameron Kirby

V8 SUPERCARS and GT3 are not in competition with each other in Australia. That is the assessment from V8 Supercars CEO James Warburton and Australian GT boss Tony Quinn as the two motorsport big wigs have made frank assessments of their respective categories in Australia.

With the continued growth of GT3 globally, a vocal minority has suggested V8 Supercars move towards adopting GT3 as the premier category, most notably Romolo Liebchen, Head of Audi Sport customer racing boss, who called on the V8s to switch to the universal global formula.

AA asked Warburton whether there were lessons to be learned from GT3 in attracting manufacturers to the sport after initial Gen2 Supercar plans for 2017 have so far failed to attract any new companies to the series.

The V8 boss distanced himself from comparing the two categories, calling GT3 a “niche sport”.

“GT3 and V8 Supercars are completely different business models,” he offered. “V8 Supercars is a mainstream sport, with one of the highest followings on a per-capita basis globally. GT3 is a customer racing category whereby manufacturers sell their homologated cars and support packages to participating teams to race.”

V8 Supercars took a 50-percent stake in the Bathurst 12 Hour race last year, running the GT3 event for the first time in February. Warburton referred to spectator and viewing figures to shut down comparisons between the two events.

“People try to compare them but they are two distinct forms of motorsport,” he explained. “Look at the facts: the Bathurst 1000 had an attendance of 201,416 people and 2.2 million Australians watched the race on average over six hours. The Bathurst 12 Hour had 37,079 spectators and 400,000 Australians watched on average over 12 hours.”

Despite his rough assessment of GT3 racing locally, Warburton says the two categories both have a place within Australian motorsport.

“One is a touring car category and the other is a sportscar category,” he added. “One has popular mainstream appeal across the community and the other is a niche sport. But there is no reason why they can’t co-exist.”

Meanwhile, Australian GT owner Tony Quinn predicts a difficult plan for the future for V8 Supercars. While speaking to *Auto Action*, Quinn

“One has popular mainstream appeal across the community and the other is a niche sport. But there is no reason why they can’t co-exist” **JAMES Warburton**

downplayed any suggestion GT3 would replace touring cars at the top of the Australian motorsport ladder. However, he did suggest V8 Supercars faces a troubled future without appropriate planning.

The AGT boss admits he is unaware of the inner workings of V8 Supercars, but as a shrewd businessman and owner of two flourishing categories, can make an educated assessment of the series’ health.

“The V8 Supercar model in Australia has for 25 years been very, very strong,” Quinn told *Auto Action*. “The change in the television deal, the ending of Holden and Ford making cars in Australia along with the Red versus Blue war – all of those things are going to lead to V8 Supercars having to readdress their image and reason for being. I think they have got a challenge ahead of them.”

“I think in any business, regardless of whether you have got growth or not, at the very least you need a strategy or plan. As far as I can see, and I don’t know the ins and outs of it, but publicly I can’t recognise, I can’t see the V8 plan.”

Quinn added V8 Supercars should also be looking to focus locally rather than international races in Asia and further abroad.

“V8 Supercars isn’t earning any brownie points by talking about going to Russia or Korea,” he said.



FIGHT OF FANTASY

The expert panel is out over whether a thoroughbred GT3 racecar could beat a V8 Supercar at Mount Panorama

THE DEBATE of what car is king of the hill at Mount Panorama might not be as simple as it seems.

Despite Shane van Gisbergen's all-conquering 2:01.286sec lap from qualifying at this year's Bathurst 12 Hour resetting the outright lap record, two experts aren't so certain a GT3 would come out on top in a Bathurst battle with a V8 Supercar.

Erik Pender is a former V8 Supercar engineer, and the man behind Greg Murphy's 'Lap of the Gods' turned GT3 engineer with the Melbourne Performance Centre. He explains that despite a V8 Supercars near four-second deficit in qualifying pace, on a flying lap started side-by-side with a GT3 car the touring car could hold its own.

"On a race lap, it would be difficult [for a GT3 car], because the V8 Supercar would get to Turn 2 at Bathurst earlier," Pender told *Auto Action*. "The GT3 car would be all over it across the top, but whether it would be enough to get past... maybe at Skyline, but it would be a pretty tough pass."

The engineering guru says it would be a tough task for the GT3 driver to make a pass work and then keep it down Bathurst's long straights.

"Maybe down into Forrest's Elbow you could get a run on the Supercar, but the Supercar would blow past you down the straight. The GT3 car could get past again braking into The Chase, that is where you see a big speed difference, how much speed the GT3 car can carry through the left-hander in The Chase."

V8 Supercars driver David Reynolds also wasn't convinced the GT3 car would be able to defeat a V8 Supercar so easily. The Erebus Motorsport driver had his first taste behind the wheel of a GT3 car at the Bathurst 12 Hour, and couldn't decide a clear winner in the hypothetical showdown.

Reynolds emphasised how important straight-line speed is to racing at Bathurst.

"In the 12 Hour, the Audi was really good across the top, but it struggled up and down the straights," he explained. "So in the race it had no straight-line speed to race anyone, but when you are going a couple seconds a lap quicker it would be quite easy to pass someone. You would make it happen pretty easily." *Cameron Kirby*



Travelling to Malaysia may be hazardous

V8S HEED WARNING

V8 SUPERCARS says it will be closely monitoring the security situation in Malaysia after the Australian Government warned visitors terrorists may be planning to attack the country's capital, Kuala Lumpur.

The series is set to have a championship round at the KL City Grand Prix street circuit in August and though V8 Supercars is not promoting the event, the company will pay attention to the travel warnings.

The series sent five cars to Malaysia last year as part of a demonstration run as the championship plans on expanding into international events.

"We will monitor the security situation

in Kuala Lumpur but obviously the security of our teams, drivers, staff and fans is paramount," V8 Supercars CEO James Warburton told *Auto Action* in a statement. "At this stage we are planning for our first championship event in Malaysia in August but we will continue to monitor events there and take advice from the Australian Government as required."

As AA went to print on Monday the website for the KL City Grand Prix where tickets are purchased was out of order despite linking from the V8 Supercars site. Social media channels for the KL City Grand Prix were also taken offline. **Lewis Isaacs**

BLUE IS THE NEW BACK



FORD'S V8 Supercars faithful can remove their black armbands and feel comfortable to dress themselves in new Ford branded team gear this season – with the approval of Ford itself.

While the company has not done a backflip in regards to its presence in the category, Ford will maintain a level of limited support to Prodrive and DJR Team Penske. As it did last year, Ford will continue to support the teams with parts and panels for the FG Xs.

The car themselves will feature Ford badging and the drivers' suits will feature the famed blue oval logo – as will the team-themed merchandise available to fans from next week at the Adelaide 500.

Auto Action understands that the use of the branding was approved by Ford Australia after assent by head office in Detroit, which is rumoured to have been sought by Roger Penske himself.

Prodrive still maintains some of its 2015 'company cars' but a new deal with retail giant Bayford has seen the fleet topped up with a number of 2016 Fords. Among the new arrivals are five of the much sought-after Mustangs, Mark Winterbottom claiming a V8 model, for which a waiting list stretches far into 2017. Chaz Mostert will have to make do with a four-cylinder EcoSport version until a V8 that he has ordered for himself arrives...

DJRPT has a similar deal with a local dealer, which somewhat echoes the team's distant past, when Dick Johnson's career was launched and supported by car dealers rather than by manufacturers. **PB**

THE SPY

The latest scoops and hottest gossip from AA's man of mystery



PERKIN' UP

THE SPY was watching the timing screens from the Winton V8 Supercars test day on Monday when he noticed Jack Perkins's name pop up. The Holden Racing Team co-driver was taking to the track in the #54 Eggleston Motorsport Holden Commodore for the day, putting in several laps. Perkins made a one-off cameo in the Kumho V8 Touring Car series last year for Eggleston. Could a Dunlop Series drive be on the cards?

STIX-ING AROUND

IN WHAT'S become one of V8 Supercars' big will they or won't they stories, it now appears Darrell Lea will once again adorn the flanks of the Tekno Autosports Commodore in 2016. The Spy understands several of the team's minor sponsors, such as Lucas Oil, will be missing from the car. The chocolate company is believed to be paying up to 70-percent less than it has in previous

seasons for the title sponsorship rights.

JOHNNY WALKIN

WALKINSHAW RACING'S anticipated Australian GT tilt will be headlined by experienced sportscar racer John Martin. The 2006 Formula Ford Champion built an impressive profile racing overseas before returning home for limited Carrera Cup running. Martin is likely to race alongside Aaron Tebb at the squad.

STICKER 'EM UP

THE RACE for V8 sponsors continues as the Clipsal 500 looms. The Spy noted the matte black and green car #6 of Cameron Waters had zero sponsors on it at the Supercars test day... though it dropped a significant hint a deal with Monster is imminent. Meanwhile, Rick Kelly ran an interim Sengled livery for fancy lights that have speakers or wifi in 'em.

THIS WEEK'S RACE CALENDAR Brought to you by: www.speedflow.com.au

DATE	EVENT	ROUND	CIRCUIT/VENUE
Feb 26-28	NASCAR Sprint Cup	R2/36	Atlanta, USA
Feb 26-28	Xfinity Series	R2/33	Atlanta, USA
Feb 26-28	NASCAR Trucks	R2/23	Atlanta, USA
Mar 04-06	V8 Supercars	R1/15	Adelaide, SA
Mar 04-06	Dunlop Series	R1/7	Adelaide, SA

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IF YOU'D told me 12 months I would be driving for Prodrive in a program supported by a brand new sponsor to the sport, I wouldn't have believed you. But I am delighted to say that's the opportunity I now have and it's genuinely a dream come true.

To be joining Prodrive off the back of their wins in V8 Supercars and the Dunlop Series last year is amazing... It's a big responsibility to be stepping in to defend the team's Dunlop Series title. I am really humbled by the faith shown in me by Tim Edwards and everyone at PRA.

We've been able to introduce GoGetta Equipment Funding as our naming rights partner, a company brand new to the sport and incredibly enthusiastic. You won't be able to miss the GoGetta Falcon, either – it looks awesome and most people reckon it's one of the best looking V8 Supercars ever!

We launched our program to some of the GoGetta staff and other sponsors last week at PRA, and they loved it. GoGetta has a raft of activations happening to make sure they can maximise the sponsorship, and you'll see the names of winning finance broker partners on the car throughout the season.

I've already been away for a week with 'Frosty' Winterbottom, Cam Waters, Chris Pither and Garry Jacobson to the annual PRA Training Camp, which was at a great facility called Thanyapura in Phuket, Thailand.

The facility is used by many athletes worldwide, including already this year Formula 1 drivers Jenson Button and Marcus Ericsson. The camp was led by Paul Turk, who is a senior trainer at the Essendon Football Club and along the way he taught us a lot about our bodies.

It was hot and humid and we trained like crazy in the gym, on the bikes, running, hiking, you name it. Paul drove us pretty

hard but it was a great way to sharpen us up, build stamina and mental alertness. Frosty swears that it makes a big difference going into the new season every year.

By the time you read this I will have also driven my PRA car for the first time. As many of you know, the COTF (Car Of The Future) cars are allowed in the Dunlop Series for the first time this season, with some changes, and they

should be the cars to have.

Given how well Frosty and Chaz went in the main game last year, I can't wait to get behind the wheel to get a feel for my new racer ahead of my PRA debut at Clipsal, now just a week or so away.

The test was at Winton, a track I know well, so that's good, but everything else will be new. So I'll be concentrating on working with my engineer Sam Potter and the PRA crew, and understanding how everyone works.

It will be a different experience as PRA do things a little differently to what I've had before but I am really looking forward to learning as much as possible. There's a lot to learn and big ambitions for this year. It's exciting times, see you trackside.

"I can't wait to get behind the wheel to get a feel for my new racer ahead of my PRA debut at Clipsal" JACK LE BROCCQ



Le Brocq will help PRA defend its Dunlop Series title

SINGLE-MINDED FOCUS

WILL DAVISON says the only disadvantage he can foresee of being a single car entry at Tekno Autosports is not having a fast teammate alongside him to push him.

Davison will share his pitboom with Triple Eight driver Craig Lowndes but says he will miss the head to head of going against a teammate.

"It's very healthy to have quick guys in the garage next to you," he told AA. "We are a single-car outfit now, but obviously we still have the access to data and will be close to the Triple Eight guys. Craig and I will push each other very hard for the pitboom priority and all that usual stuff."

"To be honest, when you've got a very fast

teammate you push each other along. I did that with Garth [Tander] and I, winning the team's championship and finishing second and third. Frosty (Mark Winterbottom) and I were third and fourth two years running."

Davison enjoys racing the other guy in the garage



While he admits his two years at Erebus were tough after leaving championship contenders Ford Performance Racing at the end of 2013, Davison says he learned a lot in his time with Mercedes team.

"I left FPR knowing I was leaving the second-best team in pitlane," he added. "It was not as though I was thinking they weren't good; I knew they were a great team, the best I've driven for to date."

"Hindsight is a wonderful thing, but I've still learned over the last two years. At the end of the day I've had to get myself back in a fast car and that's what I've done." **Lewis Isaacs**



Holdsworth will team up with Karl Reindler for the enduros

SCHWERKOLT

"If I stuff up, it's on me"

ITINERANT TEAM owner Charlie Schwerkolt admits that going solo is his last shot at cementing his squad in V8 Supercars.

In his third move since his bust-up with Dick Johnson, Schwerkolt has set up his own standalone operation with an ex-Triple Eight VF Commodore for driver Lee Holdsworth.

"Well, this is it," Schwerkolt confessed. "This has got to work. I'm in control of my destiny, so if I stuff it up, it's my own fault."

While acknowledging the risks of his go-it-alone approach, he expects the support he has gathered will provide Holdsworth with a car to match his capabilities.

"It was the best option to go this way and I think I have the right mix of people to make it work," Schwerkolt said. "I'm confident we'll punch above our weight."

The Gold Coast-based forklift magnate secured season-long naming rights backing to run his Team 18 entry as Preston Hire Racing in a striking black and yellow livery.

He has assembled a tight-knit crew headed by team manager Jeff Grech, who ran the Holden Racing Team in its glory years.

Schwerkolt believes the limitations of a lean one-car squad will be offset by signing an all-encompassing technical support agreement with Triple Eight.

"I don't feel like we're on our own," he said. "If we have problems in the pitlane, Triple Eight will be down and helping us. All our data, everything, will be linked with them, so even though we're on our own, we have a really strong technical alliance."

Although the running costs will be similar to his previous customer car arrangements, Schwerkolt had to invest heavily in equipping his team, including buying Jamie Whincup's original Car Of The Future VF Commodore with the latest-spec KRE engine and full T8 technical support.

"We have all the right gear," he declared. "We get all Triple Eight's data, drivers sharing debriefs and all that sort of stuff, so we basically get nearly everything."

"There are options already for improving performance. Triple Eight is continually engineering and improving, and all those options will be offered to us." Mark Fogarty

Hazelwood's best chance

TODD HAZELWOOD is amped for the 2016 Dunlop Series season after getting his first taste of driving a Car Of The Future.

The Matt Stone racing driver turned his first laps in the team's ex-Tekno Autosports VF Commodore during at test day at Queensland Raceway last Thursday (February 18).

"The car felt totally different to drive, but it actually gave me quite good confidence to really push and have a good crack,"

Hazelwood said. "This is the best prepared we have ever been in the Dunlop Series, and probably the best prepared we have been for the last five years of racing."

"As far as financially, and the ingredients of success, I think we could have a good shot this year, and now is the time for me to be focussing on the racing and getting the most out of myself instead of worrying about sponsorship or fundraising." Cameron Kirby

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Normally a driver has to mount his new tyres onto their rims and then onto the car. A track must be hired and the car driven around the track a few times to generate the heat to break down the small molecular bonds. After these laps, the wheels must be taken off, the tyres dismounted and allowed to cool and cure for a few days before being raced.

The problem with this "manual scrubbing" is that first of all it is expensive and time consuming. Second, the driver cannot be sure what temperatures his tyres actually heated up to during his laps around the circuit and very importantly these temperatures can be different from side to side depending on the camber of the course. On top of fluctuating temperatures, which can seriously effect the tyres,

many drivers do not have time to wait the full - recommended - curing time of 14 days and therefore race within days or sometimes hours from being scrubbed... again effecting grip and longevity!!

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BMW is back, in black

BMW'S NEW GT racer could be the car to beat in numbers, as well as performance, in Australia in 2016.

That is the opinion of Marc Werner, the CEO of BMW Group Australia, at the unveiling of the first M6 GT3 to make it Down Under.

The car was shown to the media at BMW's Melbourne headquarters on Friday and the first example will be raced this season by multiple Bathurst 1000 winner Steven Richards and Max Twigg.

Werner predicted that there could be more M6 racecars headed to Australia before long, as BMW

had received "several enquiries from competitors wanting to switch from other brands".

Auto Action understands that a second M6 will be heading to Australia within a matter of weeks, while Australian GT owner and competitor Tony Quinn has also ordered an M6.

There will be two championships for the booming class this season, with an endurance championship joining the Sprint series for the first time. Richards and Twigg will race the car sporting the number 100 to commemorate the marque's centenary.

Richards shook the car down at Winton Motor

Raceway earlier this week, while final Balance Of Performance testing is expected to be completed just in time for the car's appearance, at the Clipsal 500 meeting in March.

The move into GT racing is a significant one for BMW as it marks the company's first new motorsport program since its exit from Formula 1 in 2009. For the Australian branch of the company the link with Richards is particularly poignant, as his first appearance in the M6 will come almost exactly 29 years after his father Jim Richards gave the iconic Group A BMW M3 its world debut at Calder Park in 1987. *Phil Branagan*

Denyer leaves Maranello in a flap

MARANELLO MOTORSPORT is on the hunt for a new amateur driver for its Australian GT line-up following the last-minute departure of Grant Denyer for Tekno Autosports.

Just two weeks before the opening round of the championship at the Clipsal 500, it was revealed Denyer would leave Maranello where he was set to partner Tony D'Alberto. Denyer will instead link up with Tekno where he will race alongside team owner Jonathan Webb in a McLaren 650S GT3.

Maranello team boss Mark Coffey told *Auto Action* the Ferrari squad was given no warning of the change, and is now on the hunt for an

amateur to take Denyer's place.

"It was a shock to us, we had signed the appropriate contracts and everything was agreed," Coffey revealed. "I am not sure what [Denyer] was offered, we haven't spoken to him, it is all a bit unusual to be honest.

"It is nothing personal; no one has had a fallout here, which a lot of people have speculated on because of the late nature of the change. But Tony [D'Alberto] is a bit gobsmacked, I have got to say."

The last-minute change puts Maranello in the tough position of finding a suitable replacement. D'Alberto is unable to drive solo as a Pro2 ranked

driver, and Clipsal is arguably the toughest track AGT visits throughout the year.

"There is a few options, but signing someone who is a good driver and got some sort of budget as an amateur is difficult," the team boss said. "But more importantly, going to somewhere like Clipsal, you want someone with car experience. It is the one place that we go to that really needs some know-how about the machine you are driving – it is very important at that track.

"It is difficult because it is not the place you want to throw a new driver into an unfamiliar car."

Cameron Kirby

SPARE PARTS

HIGH-LEVEL OPERATOR

Mark Skaife will be back in the V8 Supercars commentary box this year after a shared production between Fox Sports and Supercars Media was confirmed. Skaife will work alongside Neil Crompton while Greg Rust will shift to pitlane duties

MOLLY HONOURED

Aussie rally star Molly Taylor snared the prestigious Peter Brock Medal at the CAMS awards gala evening in Melbourne. The 27-year-old is still to confirm her 2016 plans but impressed last year to finish runner-up in the Australian Rally Championship.

CO-DRIVES LOCKED IN

V8 teams have jumped early to confirm their 2016 co-drivers. Warren Luff and Jack Perkins will continue alongside Garth Tander and James Courtney, respectively, at the Holden Racing Team, while Karl Reindler joins Team Eighteen alongside Lee Holdsworth. As reported in AA #1676, Tony D'Alberto and Luke Youlden join DJR Team Penske as part of a new-look driver line-up for the team.

TEST REST

Erebus Motorsport and Lucas Dumbrell Motorsport both opted to skip the pre-season V8 test at Winton on Monday, instead they will both hit the track today (Thursday). The two V8 minnows hope the extra preparation time and fewer cars running will be a boost ahead of the season-opening Clipsal 500.

IT'S RAINING GENTLEMEN



Carrera Cup provides different options to GTs

THE RISE of Australian GT racing is not having an impact on fellow pro-am series Carrera Cup, according to Porsche Cars Australia's Motorsport Manager Kurt Sakzewski.

While Australian GT's growth has allowed it to expand to three championships this year, Sakzewski, says Carrera Cup provides a different option for the gentleman driver that underpins both categories.

Carrera Cup Australia has five Challenge [Amateur] entries for this year confirmed so far, while 12 have registered interest in the Pro class.

"It provides a different product to what GT3 racing is," Sakzewski told AA. "We have single driver races. It's a one make series, and the thing is, that all boils down

to the driver. Everyone has the same equipment. If you're good, that'll be shown up easily because no one can outbrake you with better brakes or stuff like that.

"It's also cost-effective as well. There's no R&D. The cars don't have big upgrades at the end of each year and we have the sprint round format with three races, practice and qualifying, so it's manageable and a good way for a driver to show their skills."

Though GT racing's variety has been a contributing factor in the growth of GT3 racing worldwide, Sakzewski says the local Porsche series are also reaping the benefits of GT's boom.

"In Australia at the moment open-wheelers are struggling a little bit while GT and saloon racing is really growing,"

he said. "In GT3 Cup Challenge alone we went from averaging 16 cars a round to last year with over 20 at every round. It's strong and there's new guys coming in while others are going to the next level. That's what you want."

"It's fair to say there's some guys racing GT at the moment that five years ago would have gone straight to Carrera Cup. But the good thing is in Australian racing that style is large at the moment. Say 10 years ago you might have had 16 to 18 Carrera Cup cars and 16 in GT, so both were bubbling along. Now we run with 22 plus and they have 34-plus in their main championships. The good thing is there's enough of a market to feed both categories, but we offer different products."

Lewis Isaacs

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WHO'S WHO

EDITOR Rob Margeit
DEPUTY EDITOR Lewis Isaacs
ART DIRECTOR Kieran Liu
STAFF JOURNALIST Cameron Kirby
SUB EDITOR Matt Reekie
EDITOR-AT-LARGE Mark Fogarty
DESIGNER Matt Gray
STATEWIDE EDITOR Garry O'Brien

CONTACT US
Phone: (02) 8268 4673
Email: autoaction@bauer-media.com.au
Postal Address GPO Box 4088, Sydney NSW 2001

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Phil Branagan (V8s), Dan Knutson (F1), Curt Cavin (IndyCars/NASCAR), Jerry Williams (WRC), Michael and Andrew Cotton (Sportscars), Bernard Carpinter (NZ), John Doig (Drags/Sprintcars), Frank Joseph (Karts)

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS/ARTISTS
Mark Horsburgh, James Baker, Ross Gibb, Torque Photos, Nathan Wong, LAT Photographic, Dirk Klynsmith, John Stoneham (cartoonist)

PUBLISHER – SPECIALIST DIVISION Cornelia Schulze
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER – SPECIALIST DIVISION Ewen Page
GROUP MANAGER, BRAND ADVERTISING Simon Davies
GROUP SALES MANAGER, MOTORING Matt Rice
BRAND MANAGER Tim Medway
NATIONAL CIRCULATION MANAGER Carrie Raiss
CIRCULATION MANAGER Thomas Dang

For advertising queries ONLY, please contact:
BRAND SALES MANAGER Shehan Gunawardana
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Email: Shehan.G@bauertrader.com.au
VICTORIA ADVERTISING Bruce Williams
Mob: 0418 349 555
Email: bruce@overdrivemedia.com.au
QUEENSLAND ADVERTISING James Secher
Mob: 0413 883 079
Email: james@motormedia.com.au
PRODUCTION CONTROLLER Ian Henn
Tel: (02) 9282 8333
Email: ihenn@bauer-media.com.au
ADVERTISING PRODUCTION CO-ORDINATOR Dom Roy
Tel: (02) 9282 8691
Email: droy@bauer-media.com.au

Back issues, subscriptions: magshop@bauer-media.com.au

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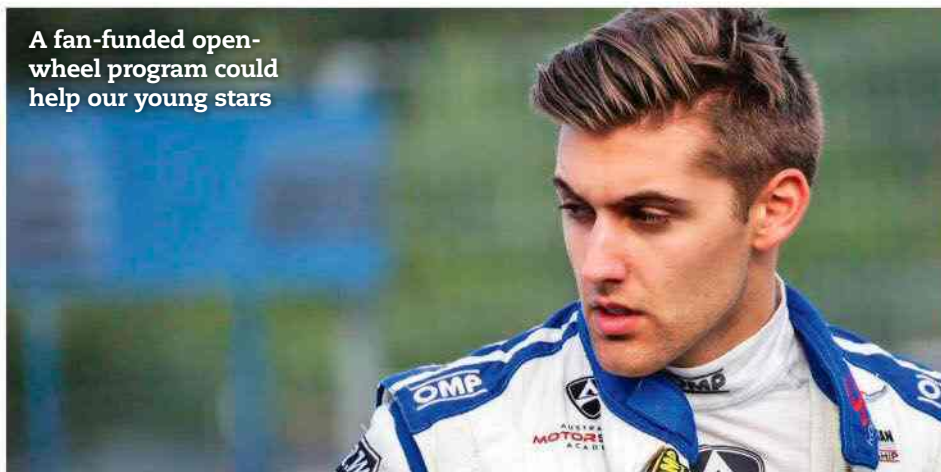
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Auto Action 2010 Winner
Motoring Magazine of the Year
Niche Magazine of the Year



YOUR SHOUT

A fan-funded open-wheel program could help our young stars



WHAT A WASTE

YET ANOTHER good open-wheel driver returns home. Anton De Pasquale will be in the Dunlop Series this year; what a bloody waste of talent! A couple of years ago he won the Formula Renault series and now he's going to be lost to the tin-tops.

I know money is always a problem. Back in the 1960s the Kiwis took sixpence from everyone's entrance fee to fund their Driver to Europe Series. Bruce McLaren and Denny Hulme were just two of the beneficiaries. Why not do the same here? If they took \$1 and invested it in the future of Aussie talent it'd pay huge dividends and it would really live up any open-wheel series they applied it to, perhaps Formula Ford or Formula 3. And they could maybe even revive the Gold Star for Australia's

premier open-wheel driver.

Let's save our open-wheel series before it's too late. F4 is not the answer, unfortunately.

Don Cameron
via email

ED: That's a nice idea, Don. Just imagine, in 2015 around 1.9million people attended a V8 Supercar event. If everyone chipped in just \$1, then that would go a long way to funding any of our brightest prospects on the international motorsport stage. It's worth thinking about...

AN ABSOLUTE DRAG

I'M WRITING to you to see if the media can guilt Foxtel into broadcasting the NHRA drags this year.

Previously Foxtel has had coverage of all the drag meetings from USA. This

year, the season started last weekend and there is no coverage listed at all.

It is disappointing to see that Foxtel has no coverage of these meetings. Also this season they have not included coverage of the NASCAR Truck Series.

I was hoping some media reports might help get the racing back on Foxtel. Not everyone wants to watch football 24/7.

I have tried contacting Foxtel but once you get through you get someone who doesn't really explain why and I believe they didn't know what I was asking about.

Di Lauder
via email

ED: Foxtel has responded to several inquiries from drag racing fans on this issue. Here is their response in full: "Regrettably Foxtel was unable to secure the rights for this year's NHRA events. Our programming team is looking into this and seeing if it can be brought into our future schedule. Although Fox Sports in the US has gained the rights this will not necessarily reflect the same broadcasts for Fox Sports here: the brand's the same, but they are different channels in the end, and rights can differ for each country."

JOKE'S ON GEN2

WHAT A joke this is! You really think you can create parity between V8, V6 turbo and twin-turbo four-cylinder engines when we can't create parity when it comes to twin coil suspension,

BRAIN TEASERS

1. What year did Jeff Gordon last win a NASCAR Sprint Cup race at Atlanta?

2. Who is the only Australian to win an American Le Mans Series race outright at the St. Petersburg street circuit?

3. How many times has Will Power won the St. Petersburg IndyCar Grand Prix?

4. What years did the Porsche RS Spyder LMP2 car compete at the 24 Hours of Le Mans? (Pictured)

5. Who was the first Canadian to win the St. Petersburg Grand Prix?

6. How many times did Sébastien Loeb win Rally Mexico?

7. What year did Rally Mexico first become a round of the World Rally Championship?
8. Who won the first Rally Mexico held as part of the WRC?
9. What year did Sébastien Ogier first win Rally Mexico?
10. Where did David Reynolds finish in his GT3 debut?

Answers on page 46

“The wishy-washy way Gen2 has started to be rolled out is beyond my maximum level of disappointment”

DAVID BOYLE

front and rear downforce, or the ‘cool fuel lines’ bullshit of 2009?

We starve the category of tyres and then stifle them when it comes to testing. The sport that I once knew so well, and now the sport I am forced to love has become a laugh!

Gen2 should comprise or a strict set of rules and a strict implementation window! Not this V8 vs V6 joke that has been proposed. And f*** chasing manufacturers up the road with an open cheque book when they clearly don’t want to be involved.

I do understand that massive change is required, and I am happy to embrace that, but the wishy-washy way it has started to be rolled out is beyond my maximum level of disappointment.

David Boyle
via Facebook

ED: Hopefully, David, V8 Supercars has some smart people on board when the time comes for trying to equalise the performance between any number of engine/car configurations. Sometimes I think we should ditch the eternal search for parity and opt for a GT-like Balance of Performance. It’s not perfect, but when dealing with multiple platforms it surely is the easier and cheaper method to opt for.



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* We reserve the right to edit letters for brevity and accuracy. We also reserve the right to check bona fides.



ED'S
DESK

Rob Margeit

Thanks Erebus!

WE DON'T usually get to pore over a lot of engineering data from a race team. It's the stuff of secret, normally only seen by those in a team as engineers and drivers study the lines, the braking points, the throttle application, striving to find a faster way around the track. But, as you'll see starting on page 28, Erebus Motorsport has opened its laptop and shared its data with Auto Action. The result is a fascinating insight into the speed secrets of a frontline GT3 racer compared to a V8 Supercar.

On the surface, how the vastly different cars harvest speed is not exactly rocket science. One, the SLS AMG GT3, enjoys superior aero grip and bigger tyres. The other, the (sadly, now benched) AMG E63 V8 Supercar, makes up for its aero weaknesses with more grunt and higher top speed. But with the benefit of team data and some insight from drivers and engineers, those differences can now be seen in minute detail.

It makes for fascinating reading and has certainly given us a better understanding of the dynamics of both cars. I'm sure you'll enjoy it, too. We owe a big debt of gratitude to Erebus Motorsport for not being shy with the information.

The inspiration for this story came from the increasingly loud call from some motorsport fans for GT3 to become the premier category in Australia. It's an interesting idea but is it coming from the right place?

Many fans have expressed that, increasingly, V8 Supercars is becoming less relevant to what our automotive landscape looks like. I'm not sure where some of these people live, but in my 'hood, there ain't a lot of Lambos, Ferraris, Audi R8s or McLarens parked in the driveway (mind you, there aren't a lot of Commodores or Falcons, either, and I have seen exactly one (!) Nissan Altima on the road since the Japanese giant joined V8s with that very model.

I love GT3 racing, I really do, but I also think, despite the doomsayers, V8 Supercars, in whatever form it takes, also has a future.

Our big problem as fans is that we still hark back to the days where car companies spent huge money to go racing. But increasingly, those days are over. We need to get over our obsession with manufacturers being the driving force behind motorsport and enjoy the show for what it is.

MONZA NOT MAKING A MOTZA

IT IS inconceivable that there might not be a Formula 1 race at the Autodromo Nazionale Monza which first hosted the Italian Grand Prix in 1921, and which has been the home of that race for every round of the Formula 1 World Championship since 1950 bar 1980 when the event was staged at Imola. But it is very conceivable that Bernie Ecclestone is threatening not to renew the circuit's contract.

Here is what happened. The basic plan for a new contract was for the circuit organisers to pay about 5 to 7 million euros [A\$8m to 11m] while the local government picked up the rest of the 18 million euro [A\$28.5m] annual tab.

Ecclestone, however, pointed out that the track was losing money on the grand prix, and asked how, therefore, did the organisers plan to pay? And he is demanding guarantees from the organisers who can't really give them.

Besides its historical significance, Monza really is the only circuit in Italy that can host the Italian Grand Prix.

It has again been suggested that the Autodromo Internazionale Enzo e Dino Ferrari in Imola is a possible venue, but that is impossible because the circuit no longer



THE F1
INSIDER
Dan Knutson

TAKE THE POWER **BACK**

LAST YEAR a driver was restricted to four power units for the 19 race season. This year that goes up to five power units, assuming that all 21 races actually take place. If the number of events drops below 21 then so too does the driver's allotment of power units drop, back to four.

The engine manufacturers are now discussing reducing the number of power units to three in 2018 in an effort to reduce costs. The actual hardware of the engines is expensive, so if a manufacturer has to make fewer pistons, turbos, etc. money can be saved. By 2018 the power units, first introduced in

2014, will be considerably more reliable. There were times last year when Honda would go through three power units during a single race weekend. Mercedes, meanwhile, was already so advanced in its engine program that Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg had no difficulty cruising through the season with just



meets Formula 1 safety standards, and the nearby river means that it is impossible to expand track run-off areas and the paddock. Formula 1 will never return to Imola unless huge chunks of the track, pits and paddock are completely changed.

The Mugello track, owned by Ferrari, hosts MotoGP, but it would need quite a bit of sprucing up if Formula 1 was to race there. Furthermore, access is difficult and there are few hotels in the area. And, of course, the 18 million euro fee would still have to be paid to Formula One Management by someone – and that would have to be the local government and Ferrari – and I don't see that happening.

Two of my pressroom colleagues – James Allen and Eric Silbermann – have some good ideas on what could be done to insure not only Monza but other historic tracks such as Silverstone, Spa, Hockenheim and the Nürburgring get the finances so as to be able to continue to host Formula 1 races as they have for decades.

Mercedes, Renault, Red Bull and McLaren get extra payments from the Formula 1's commercial pie because they are considered to be "historic" teams. Why are the historic teams paid but not the historic tracks?

Another thought is to have the new and wealthy venues such as Abu Dhabi, Singapore, Azerbaijan and Bahrain chip into a fund to support the historic tracks. It is, after all, in the new tracks' best interests to keep up the aura of the world championship they want to be part of.

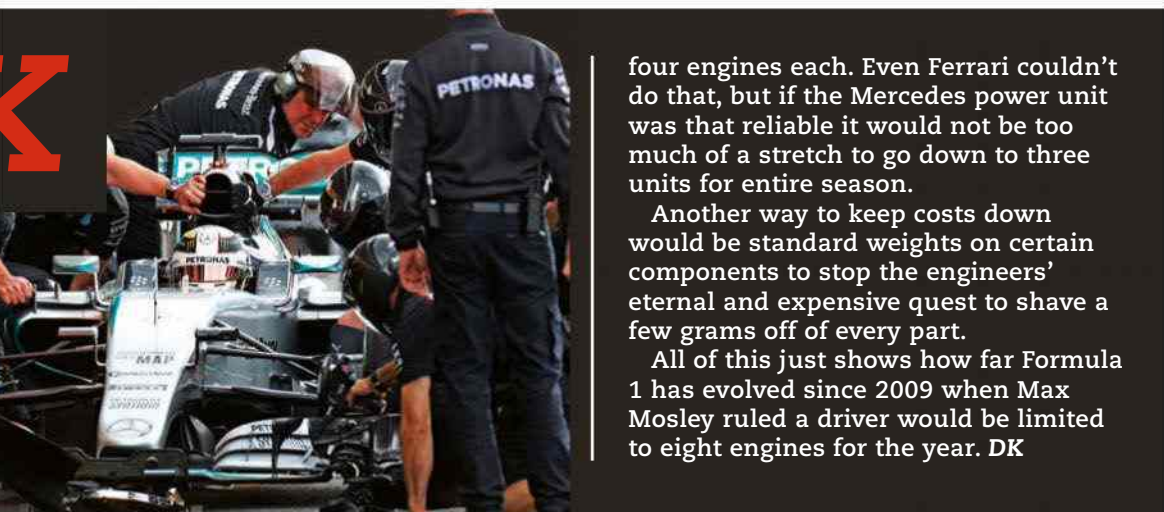
Of course, the European tracks already get a "discount" because they pay less than the new venues. And where do you draw the line between new and historic? Surely venues like Melbourne, Suzuka, Barcelona, Interlagos and Montreal fit into the latter category.

I believe Monza will keep the race, but the problem of many historic tracks not being able to afford Formula 1 is going to persist.

"Ecclestone is demanding guarantees from the organisers who can't really give them"



Monza must pay the fees just like every other track



four engines each. Even Ferrari couldn't do that, but if the Mercedes power unit was that reliable it would not be too much of a stretch to go down to three units for entire season.

Another way to keep costs down would be standard weights on certain components to stop the engineers' eternal and expensive quest to shave a few grams off of every part.

All of this just shows how far Formula 1 has evolved since 2009 when Max Mosley ruled a driver would be limited to eight engines for the year. DK

MERCEDES ALL SET-UP FOR 2016

MERCEDES DID not plan to show its hand in the first of the two four-day pre-season test sessions that took place at Spain's Circuit Barcelona-Catalunya this week.

Toto Wolff, the Head of Mercedes-Benz Motorsport, said the team's testing strategy is the same as last year. The purpose of the first test was to collect data, verify the wind tunnel numbers, check that the cooling system is adequate, make sure that the hydraulics and other systems are working reliably, and rack up the laps. Then, at the second test which will take place at the same track from March 1 to March 4, the team will work on lowering its lap times.

Wolff said that the 2016 Mercedes W06 is an evolution based on the last year's model with one or two other new and interesting concepts. With the regulations remaining relatively stable this year, the Mercedes designers did not try to reinvent the car but rather make it a progression of last year's winning concept.

"We have not gone down entirely new development paths," Wolff told *Auto Motor und Sport* magazine, "but we also did not remain super conservative. We tried to balance between evolution and revolution."

The team used the last races of 2015 to develop the 2016 car.

"We have learned a lot, especially when it comes to mechanical set-up," Wolff said, "and that flows into the 2016 car."

Of course, the reigning world champions carried so much momentum into the off-season that it is still the benchmark.

Dan Knutson



Hamilton wants to "crush everyone"

IT HAS been quiet, too quiet, for far too long. The drivers and the Formula 1 cars have been off the track since December 1 last year when a one-day Pirelli tyre test was held at the Yas Marina Circuit on the Tuesday after the season finale Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. In past years there were three pre-season tests with the first one in late January or early February. In 2016, however, there are just two four-day pre-season tests, both at Barcelona, and the first one began on February 22.

The drivers, including defending champ Lewis Hamilton, were raring to get back in their rocket cars.

"Nothing can really prepare you for when you get in a Formula 1 car," Hamilton told CBS TV. "Knowing that you are driving a multi-million dollar car, and if you crash it it is going to cost a lot of money and they might not give you another chance. It is scary."

"It is like you are strapped to a rocket," he said of the pure thrill of driving a F1 car. "And then it is like: how do you control this rocket? It is like a raging bull. It is wild, it is sexy, it is fast. This car through corners is like a fighter jet on wheels."

Hamilton claims to be the happiest that he has ever been, and that reflects in his driving.

"The way I drive, the way I handle the car is an expression of my inner feelings," he said. "It's the best job in the world. I love it."

And he is heading into testing the 2016 season raring to dominate again.

"I want to crush everyone," he said. "I want to outsmart everyone."

Dan Knutson

He wants to be the fastest and the smartest



SPARE PARTS

TRIBUTE LID

Romain Grosjean's new helmet design for the 2016 season, in colours of orange, yellow, blue and yellow and, predictably, assorted Haas logos, includes a "#JB17" which is a tribute to his friend, the late Jules Bianchi. The FIA retired the number 17 in Formula 1, which was Bianchi's number, out of respect for the French driver.

HÜLK GREEN

It will be easy to spot Nico Hülkenberg in the Force India this season with his new helmet paint scheme that is predominantly bright green. Jenson Button, meanwhile, has reverted to the 'JB' logo and Union Jack colours he had on his helmet in 2014 following a vote by fans on Twitter. A silly rule now restricts the drivers to just one basic helmet design for the year.

UP THE MATSUSHITA

McLaren-Honda has signed Japan's Nobuharu Matsushita, 22, as its test and development driver. He will focus on simulator support and engineering work. He won the 2014 All-Japan Formula 3 Championship then graduated to GP2 for 2015, racing for ART Grand Prix, alongside eventual champion Stoffel Vandoorne. He will again compete in GP2 this year.

RACEY RICCIARDO

Daniel Ricciardo doesn't mind that there are a record 21 races this year. "Having a break in August is good," he said. "That makes it a lot more achievable. If we went 21 race straight through from March to October for example, that would be pushing it. But I think it is fine. Let's throw in a few more, why not?! No testing just more racing!"

POINT TO PROVE

"Our goal with this car is to score points," Haas Team Principal Guenther Steiner said of the new Haas VF-16 car. "First, we need to go out there and show that we can do the job, that we can finish races." **DK**



Daniel is hoping for a spot of rain

Ricciardo's Lotto Prediction

DANIEL RICCIARDO believes the opening rounds of the 2016 Formula 1 season will be unpredictable, and the Aussie thinks that the chances of Red Bull winning a grand prix are not great.

"I think the first few races are a lottery," he said. "And sure, teams like Toro Rosso could be in front of us at the first couple of races; Haas, you never know; McLaren if they find the speed... There are a lot more teams that have bigger ground to make up than Mercedes and Ferrari, and Williams as well.

"If we can get past the first few races in the top six or top eight then I think come the European season

we can really start to make up the ground we need to.

"I'd like to say we can end up challenging Ferrari and Mercedes, but realistically I think we'll end up being the third team at some point over the year with the odd podium here or there, and, if it rains, the odd victory. I'd love to say more but realistically, one would be a good start. Last year we just got two podiums; one victory should mean a few podiums along the way so victory in Monaco would be all right!"

Ricciardo finished third in Hungary and second in Singapore last year while his teammate Daniil Kvyat took second in Hungary. **Dan Knutson**

MCLAREN ON THE UPTAKE

LIKE LAST year's car, the new McLaren MP4-31 has a black paint scheme that blends the car into the track surface. It would be difficult for things to go even worse for the team than last year, so really the only way for McLaren Honda to go in 2016 is up.

"As we embark on the second year of our renewed McLaren-Honda partnership, all of us remain united in our purpose," said McLaren CEO Ron Dennis. "That purpose is to develop our team towards our shared ambition: to win. We will make no predictions as to when those wins will come, but I can say without fear of contradiction that every member of our team has worked with truly relentless dedication over the past few months. The result is that MP4-31's developmental trajectory has been usefully steepened over the winter."

Dan Knutson



FERRARI'S EXPECTATIONS

Can an old-school paint scheme help revisit the glory days?



THE LIVERY of the new Ferrari SF16-H –with the white air box and white accents – harkens back to times past. The last time Ferrari used a similar paint scheme was in 1993 with the winless F93A. Given how competitive Ferrari was last year, the SF16-H should be more like the winning 312Ts of the mid-1970s that were also red and white.

Still, Ferrari President Sergio Marchionne has perhaps created excessive expectations by saying would be "a tragedy" if the team did not win the championship. Team Principal

Maurizio Arrivabene is more cautious.

"This year we need to push a bit more," Arrivabene said. "We would like to fight until the end for the championship. I know that is not going to be easy, because our competitors are not sleeping, but we are committed to do our best."

But will that best be good enough? Technical Director James Allison says the car has been improved across the board: "horsepower, downforce, handling, everywhere". Like last season, Ferrari will be the only team capable of really challenging Mercedes, but it remains to be seen just how good the Ferrari will be in 2016. **Dan Knutson**



**CAPTAIN
AMERICA**

Curt Cavin

NASCAR cracks the

NASCAR HAS laid down the boundaries, if not the law: Cross the line, take a seat. Or something like that.

The rules update covers almost everything that can happen on and off the racetrack. It's everything from domestic violence to spoiling an opponent's chance at making The Chase. No word on whether it addresses chewing gum too loudly in church.

This new world order doesn't just go for the drivers. It's anyone who participates in the sport: Team owners, crew members, sponsors.

NASCAR might require a meeting or give a warning if something happens in the heat of the moment, such as drivers shoving each other in a confrontation right after a race. But steeper punishment will come with each more-severe action. For example, verbally abusing an official, media member or fan could draw a five-

“The rules update covers almost everything that can happen on and off the racetrack, from domestic violence to spoiling an opponent's chance at making The Chase”

Deliberately taking someone out is still illegal



Open-wheeler racing needs better head gear

A.J.:
‘Wilson’s death put me off IndyCar’

A.J. ALLMENDINGER said open-wheel racing is presently too dangerous for him to return to.

The current NASCAR driver cited Justin Wilson's death last August at Pocono Raceway as an example of why such single-seaters need some form of cover for the drivers' heads. Wilson suffered a head injury when he was struck by flying debris from Sage Karam's crashed car.

“The moment Justin Wilson passed away (last August) I said, ‘Never again,’” Allmendinger said. “The only way I would do it is if they put in a

e whip

figure fine. Intentionally damaging another vehicle without endangering someone could fall under this category.

But a loss of 25 to 50 points plus a fine in the ballpark of \$50,000 or \$100,000 could come for a physical confrontation with someone that involves more than a shove. Put manipulating a race or intentionally wrecking another car in this grouping.

The two-race suspension that Matt Kenseth got for knocking Joey Logano in to the wall in last year's Sprint Cup Series race at Martinsville Speedway will be handed out again under these guidelines.

Do something even worse, like offer a racial or sexual slur, or be charged with or convicted of a fine, and an indefinite suspension or termination could follow.

Of course, each case will be judged on its own merit, and repeat offenders will be dealt with differently. But there's no difference between divisions; Xfinity and Camping World Truck Series competitors will be treated the same as Sprint Cup competitors.

Not everything is specifically addressed, which offers some latitude. But one thing is clear: NASCAR is trying to get hold of its officiating reigns.

Just what this means when the green flag drops isn't clear, but better behaviour is required by a sport too often grappling with violators.

Every rulebook has some sort of conduct code, and maybe it's better to have things written clearly enough so there is no confusion. Just watch the gum chewing.

closed cockpit over the car and tested it and they thought that was a good direction in safety. Then I might think about doing it again."

Allmendinger and Wilson were teammates both in Champ Car and in the Rolex 24 at Daytona, winning the overall crown in 2012.

For the upcoming season, IndyCar has mandated that teams must tether several pieces of the cars, including the nose cone that struck Wilson.

"That took a big part of me away right there," Allmendinger said of Wilson's death. **Curt Cavin**

SPARE PARTS

TOP EARNER

So how much does a NASCAR driver earn in a year? Forbes Magazine reports Dale Earnhardt Jr made US\$23.5million [A\$33m] in 2015. Second was Jimmie Johnson with US\$22.2million [A\$31m], Jeff Gordon third with \$21.6million [A\$30.25m], and Kevin Harvick fourth with \$15.5million [A\$21.7m].

STEERING COMMITTEE

Jimmie Johnson, Brad Keselowski and Kyle Busch are the new members of NASCAR's nine-member drivers' council, which enters its first full season as an official group. The rest are Dale Earnhardt Jr, Denny Hamlin, Tony Stewart, Kyle Larson, Kevin Harvick and Joey Logano.

SHOW CARS

Team Penske opened its 50-year celebration exhibit at Indianapolis Motor Speedway's Hall of Fame Museum. The display features the first '500-winning cars of Roger Penske's 11 drivers. The showcase is scheduled to be in place through November. These cars are usually on display at the Penske Museum in Scottsdale, Arizona.

WALL OF FAME

Firestone has put the names of the 66 drivers who have won the Indy 500 for the manufacturer on its tyre sidewalls for this year's 500.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Max Chilton said he remains interested in Formula 1 if a ride opens up. He made 35 starts for Marussia in 2013-14. "I still have a lot of unfinished business [there]," he said. Chilton recommends that Bernie Ecclestone lower F1 ticket prices. "I think Bernie was quoted as saying his target audience are wealthy pensioners," he said. "Well, it should be young race fans in their teens, 20s or 30s who are going to become fans for the next 30-40 years. That's what IndyCar does." **CC**

Rossi tapped for IndyCar return



AS AUTO Action went to press on Monday there were indications that US standout Alexander Rossi was about to return home to join the IndyCar Series.

The driver long aimed at Formula 1 but lost his chance to return to Manor Racing when Indonesian newcomer Rio Haryanto brought enough money to secure the ride for the upcoming season. With no other seats available in F1, Rossi turned his attention to IndyCar, where an interesting opportunity exists.

Late last week, former driving teammates Michael Andretti and Bryan Herta combined their Honda teams into a four-car operation. Andretti Autosport will again field Ryan Hunter-Reay, Marco Andretti and Carlos Muñoz – all former race winners – while the reconfigured Andretti Herta Autosport will field the #98 car.

Neither co-owner would confirm talks with Rossi, but several indications suggest he is their man.

Rossi, 24, made five F1 starts last year, finishing as high as 12th in the race at Circuit of the Americas in Texas. Rossi is a native of Northern California.

The merger of Andretti and Herta – driven by the fact neither had the funds to run a car alone – gives IndyCar another full-time entry, but it actually counts as one fewer than last year since Andretti fielded that car in half of the races.

The driver left out of the rotation is Gabby Chaves, the 2014 Indy Lights Champion, who drove for Bryan Herta Autosport last year. While he didn't have much competition in the rookie class last year, Chaves claimed the newcomer award for both the Indianapolis 500 and the series as a whole. Chaves must work quickly to find another ride. **Curt Cavin**

Chilton disses US track safety

NEWLY SIGNED IndyCar Series driver Max Chilton has raised concerns about some aspects of US tracks, although he wouldn't specifically identify them.

"You go to some tracks and think: 'This would never happen in the rest of the world or Europe'," he said. "They don't have the same safety standards, in my opinion, when it comes to certain tracks."

"I think with certain circuits, [F1 Race Director] Charlie Whiting would come over and say, 'Change that, change that'."

"I've spoken with a couple of drivers that have been doing [IndyCar] for many

years, without mentioning names. They go, 'Yeah, we've seen that for years but they're just not interested in changing it.'"

But Chilton, who will drive Ganassi Racing's #8 Chevrolet, likes the cars.

"I knew they had an amazing amount of downforce; they perform well in the corners," he said. "They performed better in the corners, better than I expected."

"The tyre degradation is pretty high, but it's manageable as long as you drive sensibly, control the wheel spin, you can find ways of extending the life of the tyre." **Curt Cavin**

SPARE PARTS

RUSHED REBUILD

M-Sport mechanics were racing against the clock to repair Eric Camilli's Fiesta for Rally Mexico after his destructive roll in Sweden. "The car is a bit of a mess," team boss Malcolm Wilson said. "It was a pretty violent accident, but I'm sure we'll get it sorted in time. We have to!"

MUSTARD GAS!

"I could smell the sausages as I went past. They use a lot of mustard in Sweden and you can smell it," said Mads Østberg, describing fans' favourite food at the Colin's Crest jump in Vargasen stage.

LONE WOLF

Frenchman Michel Fabre won the WRC3 category in Sweden, in his Citroën. He didn't have to work too hard. He was the only entrant in the class!

FINE FOR OGIER

World champ Sébastien Ogier was caught doing 120-130km/h on a road section in an 80km/h section in Sweden. Police took his licence but he was allowed to continue the rally. Rally organisers did not fine him.

FEAR FACTOR

"The WRC is a different thing. You have to push the throttle until you get scared," said Yazeed Al Rajhi on the difference between an R5 car and a World Rally Car.

SOLBERG DYNASTY

Oscar Solberg drove on the Swedish rally like his father, WRC star Henning Solberg. Oscar finished 38th and last after character-building problems. His dad came a fine seventh.

MEXICAN MOVES

Jari-Matti Latvala was frustrated after the Swedish Rally. "The only chance I have is with the road position in Mexico," said the VW driver. "I need to keep cool now; I need to trust the speed that I have." **JW**

Helloo! Here's HENNING

HENNING SOLBERG, renowned as the joker in the WRC pack, aims to be back in the series in time for Rally Argentina. But he wants a current spec Fiesta.

His drive to seventh on the Swedish Rally was his first entry since the opening two rounds of last year's championship and he is determined to stay for 2016.

"It's fantastic to be back," he said. "I am talking with sponsors now, but for sure I want to be back – not for Mexico but for Argentina and then after as well. But it has to be the 2015 car for me. It's really important I'm in the same car as the other guys. I have to see if Malcolm still loves me ..."

M-Sport's boss Malcolm Wilson said: "It's always good to have Henning around. He's a real character and he's certainly shown that he's still well capable of driving for a result here. It might be tricky to get him in a 2015 car for Argentina, but we'll see what we can do."

Jerry Williams



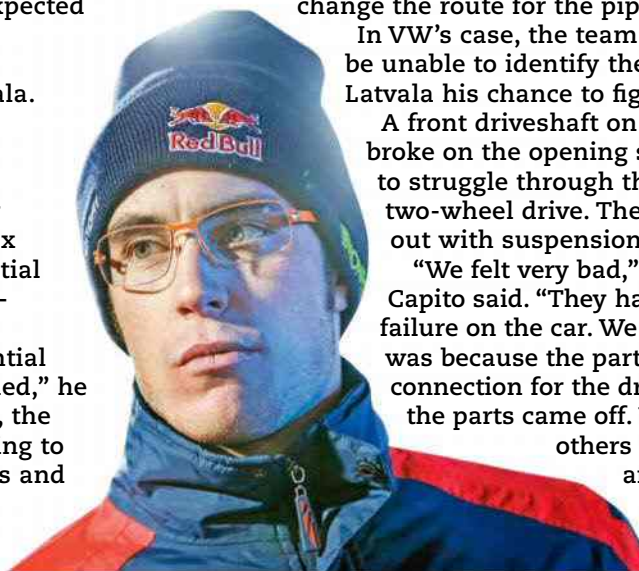
Bang! Transmission failures on ice

HYUNDAI AND VW were hit by unexpected failures in Sweden which ended the challenge of their respective drivers, Thierry Neuville and Jari-Matti Latvala.

In Hyundai's case, the team will rush through changes to the i20 before Mexico in an effort to avoid another transmission failure similar to Neuville's. The Belgian dropped six minutes when his i20's rear differential seized, forcing him to use only front-wheel drive.

"We had no cooling on the differential so it cooked itself and then it exploded," he said. "It must have all melted inside, the noise was bad and I could feel it trying to lock, it was slowing down the wheels and then it went bang."

The problem was caused by an oil leak in the cooling radiator.



Team boss Michel Nandan explained: "We had a leak on the fitting for the diff cooler. The oil came out, so everything seized. This problem was 100 per cent our fault. The route for the pipes [going in and out of the chassis rail-mounted radiator] is not safe enough and one union was getting loose and letting the oil out."

"We have a new radiator coming and we will change the route for the pipes."

In VW's case, the team admitted it would be unable to identify the issue which cost Latvala his chance to fight for victory.

A front driveshaft on the Finn's Polo broke on the opening stage, leaving him to struggle through the opening day in two-wheel drive. Then he was forced out with suspension failure.

"We felt very bad," team chief Jost Capito said. "They had a technical failure on the car. We don't know what it was because the parts are all gone. The connection for the driveshaft broke and the parts came off. We will check the others to see if we can find anything, but we are confident it won't happen again."

Jerry Williams

DRIVERS: BOYCOTT

Top WRC drivers want their safety concerns addressed

TOP WRC drivers insist they are ready to boycott stages on any round of the series if they feel their safety is compromised.

In Sweden such a protest over the opening Torsby stage was only avoided when Hyundai's Kiwi driver Hayden Paddon refused to join in.

But drivers will meet again before this week's Rally Mexico, while FIA chiefs say they will work with the crews to avoid any future action.

Before Sweden, world champion Sébastien Ogier said the only usable roads were in Norway and called for Swedish stages to be cancelled.

He and Kris Meeke pushed for the drivers' voices to be heard and when they were ignored, decided on the boycott.

"We think it's not normal we are not consulted on such things," Ogier said.

Back Weather-hit Swe



'WE'LL AGAIN!'

sed, reports Jerry Williams

"We're becoming puppets being sent out because they need to make television to make money. It's time to have some respect for our sport"

KRIS MEEKE

"We have to make sure that we take part of discussions."

Meeke said the drivers still stood firm, adding, "We need to do this [drivers' group] in a proper way. We need to at least have an input into calling the shots."

The Ulsterman feels that the WRC's commercial side has taken precedence over its sporting aspect.

"Ten years ago this rally [Sweden] would have been cancelled and the reason it wasn't is the money," Meeke said. "Money's starting to dictate now. Nobody understands that when you drive on these tyres with no studs, it's a f***ing nightmare. The speeds we're doing here, you just can't do it."

"We're becoming puppets being sent out because they need to make television to make money. It's time to have some respect for our sport. Somebody needs to grow a pair and admit that our sport's bigger than this sort of thing. If Sweden can't deliver a winter rally, we don't come back."

However, FIA Rally Director Jarmo Mahonen denied safety was at risk, saying: "Of course that is not the case. Do they really think we would jeopardise safety?"

"We have to listen to them and of course – especially where safety is concerned – we will. But, at the same time, we should remember there's no sport where the actors decide the regulations."

Mahonen said he was happy to consider a drivers' briefing where crews could air concerns ahead of the event. *Jerry Williams*

Meeke: "It's all about TV ratings, not safety"



from the dead

dish Rally cuts surprise long-term deal



THE SWEDISH Rally has experienced an astonishing turnaround after unfavourable weather looked like condemning it just two weeks ago.

Two days before the start of this year's rally it seemed certain that lack of ice and snow would force cancellation, which would have cost the event over A\$3million and wiped it out.

Then a cold front arrived and saved the event, and a week later a new contract was signed out of the blue with WRC Promoter that guarantees Sweden a calendar slot until at least 2019.

"A week ago, this event was more dead than alive," said Event CEO Glenn Olsson. "I couldn't see any future for it. It is an incredible feeling to be able to confirm we have agreed a new three-year deal."

"We had to find a deal which both us and WRC Promoter could live with. This is a level we can survive on."

However, the major teams still want the event to move north, despite Olsson saying that would not necessarily be a solution.

Citroën boss Yves Matton said that while the organisers did a good job, there was still a question mark.

"We need a snow rally in the calendar but the FIA and the promoter need to think about the best way to do that," he said.

Hyundai chief Michel Nandan added: "It was by luck the weather was in favour and we could run. The organisers did a fantastic job, but to gamble like this – it's not really the right way to do it. The weather is changing and we have to go in an area where we can be more sure [of snow]."

Rally winner Sébastien Ogier, at first against the rally running at all, said: "Sweden has a big history in rallying but we want the place where we have the best condition. I think the time has come to go north."

WRC Promoter's Oliver Ciesla agreed the weather lottery was far from ideal and said would be talking to other potential winter rallies.

"I am looking at other possibilities for a second winter rally, including in Canada, Russia and Japan," he said.

As for moving the Swedish north, Olsson said: "It's too early to talk about that. We need to have a dialogue with the FIA and the promoter on how we handle the future."

Jerry Williams

ENGLISH BRAWLER

Aston Martin's new GTE machine not dragged down by design style

ASTON MARTIN launched its V8 Vantage GTE Challenger with two development partners and an almost entirely new aero kit.

The British team has signed a deal with Dunlop for the company to provide exclusive development tyres for the car, and with oil company Total, who replaces a previous arrangement with Gulf.

Dunlop has confirmed that Aston Martin will spearhead its tyre development war at the Nürburgring 24 Hours, as well as the World Endurance Championship including Le Mans.

However, one of the most noticeable aspects of the new car is a lack of aggressive aero that has featured on the Ford GT and the Ferrari 488. This was a deliberate ploy, says Aston Martin, which has targeted a reduction in drag as its primary design target.

"We haven't gone as wild on the aero and there are reasons for that," said Aston Martin's Technical Director Dan Sayers. "We have targets that the FIA has set, and the drag is what we have to reduce. Other cars have the flared floors, but we have taken them off because it was more draggy. You get more downforce, but the efficiency wasn't so good. Everything is tailored towards drag reduction."

One consequence of this approach is that the team needed a large downforce generator and that comes in the shape of the rear diffuser, which could become a target for rival teams should they find themselves following the Aston.

"The rear diffuser could be a target for everyone," admitted Sayers. "We have had to focus so much on drag reduction that the diffuser is necessary to get the downforce levels and the correct balance. We will have to see. We have got spares!"

"There are a lot of changes to the flat floor compared to the previous car. We have worked hard to make it more efficient. The starting point for that compared to a Ford is very different. Each has their challenges and ours is aerodynamic."

"We probably needed between seven to 10 percent reduction in drag, which is not insignificant, so you can understand why we have tailored it towards drag reduction. We have suffered previously with top speed, and we have had to focus on that."

Total will bring bespoke products to the team, as well as trackside support, a move that the team believes will assist with spotting mechanical problems early on. **Andrew Cotton**



Reducing drag was a big part of the brief



Bathurst winner Rydell has retired

Rydell into the sunset

SWEDISH TOURING car legend Rickard Rydell has hung up his helmet.

The 1998 British Touring Car Championship winner is best known in Australia for his win at the AMP Bathurst 1000 in a Volvo S40 that same year with Jim Richards. The duo claimed a win from pole position, with Rydell's shootout lap 1.5 seconds faster than second-placed driver Steven Richards in the Nissan Primera, which shadowed the Volvo for most of Sunday's race.

The former factory Volvo driver won the 2012 Scandinavian Touring Car Championship and was a World Touring Car Championship competitor from 2005 to 2015, making sporadic appearances in the series.

Rydell partnered with David Brabham and Darren Turner to win the GT1 class at the 2007 Le Mans 24 Hours.

The 48-year-old also won the Macau Grand Prix in 1992 after a promising open-wheel career that included stints in Japanese Formula 3 and Formula 3000. Rydell also finished seventh at Sandown and Bathurst in 2003 with Triple Eight alongside Paul Radisich.

"I have decided to not compete in 2016 and this also means I'm retiring from racing," said Rydell.

"I was a works driver for 20 consecutive years and I'm very privileged and proud to have represented brands like Toyota, Volvo, SEAT and Aston Martin in major championships and races. It was also fun to come home to Sweden and STCC after 21 seasons of international racing."

Tyred and tested

PORSCHE CONDUCTED an eight-day test of its new 919 LMP1 racer in Abu Dhabi last week in conjunction with Michelin.

World Champions Timo Bernhard, Brendon Hartley and Mark Webber were behind the wheel for five days, clocking over 4000 kilometres between them.

The team tested a variety of Michelin tyres, designed to perform in different temperatures.

"We are very pleased with this test," Team Principal Andreas Seidl said. "It is a demanding and important task to make the right choices out of the variety of tyres as we will spend the season on them."

"Consistent conditions are essential to get reliable results. In Abu Dhabi we didn't only have dry conditions but also constant temperatures. We can't find such conditions in Europe at this time of the year."

Meanwhile, Dunlop has signed a deal to partner

the Rebellion Racing team in LMP1, as well as the ByKolles team.

Both have run Michelin tyres that have been specifically developed for four-wheel drive, as used by the manufacturers. This has led to a problem generating heat in the front tyres without putting power through them.

Dunlop was unable to supply either team in 2015 as it was moving factories from its Birmingham, UK base to Germany.

A small fire at the Fort Dunlop facility has not caused major damage, according to the company.

Andrew Cotton

Race Control

Your weekly wrap-up of all the motorsport action from around the world

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Denny Hamlin wins closest-ever Daytona 500

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A Yank and a local dominate in WA

Denny Hamlin celebrates his first Daytona 500 victory

**WHAT:**

NASCAR Sprint Cup, Round 1

Daytona 500

WHERE:

Daytona International Speedway,

Florida, USA

WHEN:

February 21

POLE:

Chase Elliott

WINNER:

Denny Hamlin



Denny dares to win

DENNY HAMLIN came dangerously close to making his boss, Joe Gibbs, a very unhappy man Sunday at Daytona International Speedway.

On the final lap of the Daytona 500, Hamlin had the fourth of five Toyota cars lined up in the inside lane in the lead, and they weren't going to be passed.

But Hamlin, the aggressive and sometimes stubborn driver that he is, refused to stay put. He didn't like seeing fellow Joe Gibbs Racing driver Matt Kenseth in the lead for NASCAR's most important Sprint Cup Series race of the season, and he wasn't about to let Martin Truex Jr and Kyle Busch finish ahead of him.

So, with guts seeking glory, Hamlin moved into the outside lane approaching Turn 3 and hoped for the best. He got somewhat of a push from Kevin Harvick and put his head down. The others knew what was coming. Or, rather, who was coming.

Hamlin pulled alongside Busch, another Gibbs teammate, for third place, then saw the jockeying of Kenseth and Truex create a situation where the middle opened up. To no one's surprise, Hamlin turned his #11 car into that unoccupied space.

What happened from that point on surely had Gibbs, the former NFL football coach, holding his breath. Kenseth's car bobbled to the point it nearly hit the wall

at the entrance of Turn 4, leaving Truex as the leader with Hamlin charging.

The indigestion in Gibbs's stomach came from the fact that while Truex's Furniture Row Racing team has an alliance with JGR, it isn't a JGR car, and with Hamlin's moves the car of Kenseth was out of contention. And fourth teammate, Carl Edwards, who had made contact with another car early in the race, had too much tape on the nose of his car to be anything of a factor given his aerodynamic disadvantage. Busch, too, slipped some amid the scramble.

So, Hamlin was on his own to finish the job, and he did. Barely.

Coming off the fourth turn it was Truex's race to win, and it even appeared from



The closest winning margin in the history of the race: 0.01sec

Last-lap hero Denny Hamlin found the space to win by the skinniest margin in Daytona 500 history, reports Curt Cavin



Hamlin was at a loss to explain exactly how he'd done it



Kenseth (#20) helped Hamlin (#11) get to the lead, then wobbled out of the top 10

THE TURNING POINT

IT WOULD be easy to say the Daytona 500's winning move came on the final lap as Denny Hamlin swept from fourth to first in spectacular fashion, but the turning point was the collaboration of the four Joe Gibbs Racing drivers – plus Martin Truex Jr, who works in alliance as a Toyota driver.

After the final set of pitstops took shape – under greens, no less – the partners got together and worked as one. They grabbed the bottom lane because recent races at Daytona International Speedway have shown

it's a long way to go on the outside with these aerodynamic configurations. Joey Logano tried to get the lead from the outside late in the race but he couldn't make it happen.

So with Matt Kenseth leading a Toyota train that included Truex, reigning series champion Kyle Busch, Hamlin and Carl Edwards, the shootout was set. Fact is, no one was going to catch them, and they knew it.

The only question was, which of them would win, and Hamlin solved that by edging Truex from the outside.



It was fairly clear that a Toyota was going to win it

SPARE PARTS

BLOWN CHANCE

Greg Biffle's chance to win the Daytona 500 exploded when he blew a right-rear tyre. The problem was that compound was designed for the left side. Big mistake for the crew.

SAND BAGGED

Tony Stewart, who suffered a broken back in a recreational dune buggy crash not only sat out the Daytona 500, he wasn't even at the track, something he said was difficult to accept. He can't say when he'll return; his next X-ray is March 9.

BACKING UP

Matt Kenseth, Jimmie Johnson, A.J. Allmendinger, Martin Truex Jr and Brian Scott had to start at the back of the field due to racing with a backup car following crashes in Thursday's Can-Am Duel races.

NERVOUS TALKER

After competing in every Daytona 500 since 1993, three-time winner Jeff Gordon was in the television broadcast booth for this one. He admitted being nervous but it said it was nothing like the excitement preparing for the driving in the race.

NO PARKING

In an effort to eliminate start-and-park entries, NASCAR reduced the field from 43 cars to 40. That standard will be in effect all season.

CHARACTER BUILDING

A pair of rookies were involved in hard hits on lap 92. Chris Buescher, last year's Xfinity Series Champion, and Matt DiBenedetto were slow to exit their cars, but they were later cleared without injury.

BACK-TO-BACKERS

With Joey Logano not winning, the '500 still has only three drivers win in consecutive years: Richard Petty, Cale Yarborough and Sterling Marlin.



The first 20 cars finished within one second of each other

“I can’t even figure out what I did. It just all came together, and I got a great push from Kevin Harvick” **DENNY HAMLIN**

certain angles that he did. But Hamlin used what’s known in stock car racing as a side draft to pull alongside the #78 car and beat him to the finish. And it was close; the closest finish in Daytona 500 history, which is saying a lot after 58 years of racing. The separation was 0.01sec; not much more than the length of a hand.

The win was the 27th in Hamlin’s Sprint Cup career – he’s won a race in 11 consecutive seasons – and his first in this event (after 11 tries). Truex, who was trying

to break a 90-race losing streak for his team, finished a career-best second with Busch third and Kevin Harvick slipping past Edwards for fourth. Last year’s race winner, Joey Logano, was sixth.

“I don’t know where that came from,” Hamlin said. “I can’t even figure out what I did. It just all came together, and I got a great push from Kevin Harvick.”

“This wouldn’t have happened without all the Toyotas sticking together. I’m so happy to get this victory for Joe Gibbs Racing.”

Said Truex: “I probably should have run him up a little more.”

Poor Kenseth. He kept the #20 car off the wall but couldn’t keep others behind him. He finished 14th.

For Gibbs, it was his first Daytona 500 victory in 23 years – since Dale Jarrett won in 1993. His drivers led 154 of the 200 laps. Toyota not only won the event for the first time, it swept the top three finishing positions.

Rookie Chase Elliott, the 20-year-old son of 1988 NASCAR Champion Bill Elliott, started on the pole, and he led the first three laps before Dale Earnhardt Jr slipped past him. Elliott’s goal was to go the distance in an effort to gain as much experience as possible in the #24 Chevrolet, but that’s not what happened.

Riding in the middle lane on lap 20,

Hamlin took a trip through the Daytona infield as he celebrated his first '500 win



RESULTS 2016 DAYTONA 500

POS	DRIVER	CAR	LAPS	DIFF
1.	Denny Hamlin	Toyota	200	3h10:25
2.	Martin Truex Jnr	Toyota	200	+0.010
3.	Kyle Busch	Toyota	200	+0.102
4.	Kevin Harvick	Chevrolet	200	+0.147
5.	Carl Edwards	Toyota	200	+0.199
6.	Joey Logano	Ford	200	+0.235
7.	Kyle Larson	Chevrolet	200	+0.352
8.	Regan Smith	Chevrolet	200	+0.358
9.	Austin Dillon	Chevrolet	200	+0.469
10.	Kurt Busch	Chevrolet	200	+0.551

2016 NASCAR STANDINGS

POS	DRIVER	POINTS
01	Denny Hamlin	45
02	Martin Truex Jnr	40
03	Kyle Busch	39
04	Kevin Harvick	37
05	Carl Edwards	36
06	Joey Logano	35
07	Kyle Larson	34
08	Regan Smith	33
09	Austin Dillon	33
10	Kurt Busch	31



Xfinity Series

THE CONTACT coming off Turn 4 was solid, but Chase Elliott had Joey Logano right where he wanted him.

Elliott's block of Logano at the end of the Xfinity Series race was enough to put a dent in Elliott's right rear quarter-panel, though he kept his Chevrolet pointed straight. Elliott won by 0.043sec for his first Daytona victory and his fifth career series win.

Logano finished second for the third time in as many races during this Speedweeks. He trailed Denny Hamlin at the end of the previous weekend's Sprint Unlimited, then was behind Dale Earnhardt Jr at the finish of the Can-Am Duel, a Thursday night qualifying race.

Earnhardt, a co-owner of Elliott's car, called the youngster's block of Logano "gutsy".

NASCAR returned and the season starts with the biggest race of the year, the Daytona 500



Elliott lost control, spun to the inside and had his car damaged when the nose caught the sod in the infield grass. Don't be surprised if the incident spurs talk of removing grass from the inside of oval tracks. He finished last in the car Jeff Gordon had driven since 1993.

Throughout Speedweeks, Earnhardt was considered the favourite to win the '500, particularly after he won his Thursday qualifying race. But Earnhardt's car got shuffled back a bit in the order, which is where he was when he came off Turn 4 sliding.

Earnhardt had drifted high but got loose trying to get a side draft off Brian Vickers's car hugging the bottom line. The slide took Earnhardt to the inside wall, where there was a glancing blow before he went to the grass as Elliott had.

Earnhardt conceded his team hadn't spent enough time in practice working on drafting. He said they "underestimated how important handling would be" in the race completing 200 laps.

It was a disappointing day for Hendrick Motorsports. In addition to the crashes of Elliott and Earnhardt, Jimmie Johnson and Danica Patrick were flagged for their crews coming over the pit wall too early on green-flag pitstops. The penalty for that is a down pit road. Johnson finished 16th, Patrick 35th.

Vickers was driving the car intended for Tony Stewart, who missed the race due to a broken back suffered in a California sand dune buggy crash. Before having Earnhardt spin next to him, Vickers had similar trouble in Turn 4, sliding around but not hitting anything.



Truck Series

JOHNNY SAUTER won the season-opening Camping World Truck Series race, a 100-lapper marred by a late 18-car pileup and Christopher Bell who flip at the finish line.

The multi-car crash occurred with seven laps left, drawing a red flag. It appeared to start when Matt Crafton and Cameron Hayley made contact, igniting a usual superspeedway scramble. The list of those collected included Rico Abreu, who made his Daytona debut. Bell escaped serious injury despite what appeared to be 10 flips.

Sauter won for the 11th time in this series. His teammate, Grant Enfinger, was on the pole for the first time in a truck.

The new caution clock didn't come into play as there were seven real cautions.

**WHAT:**

World Series Sprintcars, Round 10

WHERE:Attwell Park Speedway, Albany,
Western Australia**WHEN:**

February 19

POLE:

Steven Lines

WINNER:

Steven Lines

ROUND 10 RESULTS

POS DRIVER

RACE

01 Steven Lines

02 Brooke Tatnell

03 Shaun Bradford

04 James McFadden

05 Ryan Farrell



Battle lines drawn

Steven Lines surged into championship contention with a lights-to-flag win in Albany

STEVEN LINES'S bid for a second WSS title gained significant traction with a superb all the way victory in round 10 at the Attwell Park Speedway, Albany – home track for Lines's team owner Brian Hall.

Brooke Tatnell, chasing his ninth World Series Sprintcars championship, finished runner-up, while West Australian Shaun Bradford celebrated his 30th birthday in style, finishing third, his first WSS podium since February 2014.

Biggest loser on the night was Jamie Veal, who came into the meet leading the championship but drifted to third spot behind Tatnell and Lines after an eighth-place finish in the final.

James McFadden took fourth ahead of West Australian speedster Ryan Farrell, who claimed the hard-charger award after advancing from 12th to fifth.

Situated 410 kilometres southeast of Perth, Attwell Park Speedway was always likely to struggle to attract a large car count, a problem that was exacerbated by running on a Friday night. Along with the nine contracted WSS drivers, seven West

Australians made the journey.

The race day format was a variation on the usual WSS format with only four heat races, a mid-pack scramble and Gold, Silver and Bronze dashes to set the top eight for the A-Main.

Dave Murcott claimed his second quicktime award of the season with a spirited 12.81sec lap ahead of Tatnell and Lines, but the main interest lay further down the charts, with two-time WSS champ James McFadden struggling into 10th place and Veal well off Murcott's pace in 12th.

Standout in the heat races was local stalwart David Priolo with two wins. Lines claimed a fourth and a fifth, Tatnell pocketed a fifth and sixth, and Veal bounced back with second and third.

Lines went in the A-Main as hot favourite after easily accounting for Bradford, Murcott then Tatnell in a perfect Gold Shootout run.

The A-Main paled into comparison to several recent finals on the WSS tour.

A dusty single-lane track that afforded few opportunities to pass was the main culprit.

Lines controlled the start and on the green sped into the distance and was never headed over the 30-lap journey. Tatnell easily gathered up Bradford on lap two and after a nibble at Lines with 10 laps remaining settled for second place. Bradford was the best of the locals in nailing third. **John Doig**

Lines drove into second place in the championship

SPARE PARTS

ROOKIE SETTLED

Daniel Harding has a lock on the WSS rookie of the year award, leading fellow West Australian Jason Pryde by 140 points going into the season finale. Harding was a DNF in the B-Main at Bunbury. Pryde was 17th in the A.

LACK OF VISION

Brooke Tatnell was sent to the rear of the field in heat one after pulling to the infield to fix a broken visor before the start. "It was a safety issue," explained Tatnell. "The race officials put us to the rear of the field. That's how they read the rulebook – that's not how I see it."

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Going into the final round a total of 168 drivers have raced in WSS since the opening round at Valvoline Speedway in December.

MADMAN BACK DOWN

This weekend's final round at the Perth Motorplex will have the added spice of newly crowned Australian champion Kerry Madsen jetting in for the meeting. Madsen is currently racing in the World of Outlaws series Stateside and after three rounds has scored a pair of top-10 finishes to sit eighth in points.

SINKING FEELING

Jamie Maiolo started off the front row after a superb run in the Gold Shootout at Bunbury but slipped back to finish 11th.

REALITY BITES

After his splendid performance at Albany, Steven Lines was not a contender at the Bunbury round. Like many of his peers, Lines struggled to pass cars. He started and finished the A-Main in fifth. **JD**

**WHAT:**

World Series Sprintcars, Round 11

WHERE:Bunbury Speedway,
Western Australia**WHEN:**

February 20

POLE:

Kyle Hirst

WINNER:

Kyle Hirst

ROUND 11 RESULTS

POS	DRIVER
RACE	
01	Kyle Hirst
02	Jamie Veal
03	Brooke Tatnell
04	Ryan Farrell
05	Steven Lines

STANDINGS

01	Brooke Tatnell	3142
02	Jamie Veal	3027
03	Steven Lines	2985
04	Kyle Hirst	2670
05	James McFadden	2660

Hirst does double

American Kyle Hirst doubled up in Bunbury with wins in both the 360- and 410-cubic inch classes

THE CALIFORNIA Kid, Kyle Hirst, made history when he became the first driver in the 29-year history of WSS to score two Sprintcar A-Main wins on the one night when he claimed the main event and the supporting 360 class feature at Bunbury.

Hirst's win was due in no small part to the inspired decision of veteran crew chief Kim 'Buzzy' Buswell to run a hard-compound tyre on the right-rear while most of his rivals elected to run with a softer option.

Joining Hirst on the podium for the historic 400th round of WSS were Jamie Veal and arch championship rival Brooke Tatnell. Both are locked in battle for the 2015-16 title that will be decided over two



Hirst won the 410 feature after earlier winning the 360

nights at the Perth Motorplex this coming weekend. Fellow title aspirant Steven Lines slipped back in the point's battle after finishing seventh.

This season's qualifying king Luke Dillon struck trouble early and posted his worst result of the year, finishing 16th out of 24. After winning the B-Main and starting 14th in the feature, he produced a superb drive to finish sixth and claim the hard-charger award.

Hirst, coming off his first win of the season at the Perth Motorplex last week, begun his marathon night of racing with a fourth in time trials followed by fourth and second in heats. He starred in the Gold Shootout to start the feature alongside local Jamie Maiolo with James

McFadden and Veal on row two.

Hirst was a tearaway leader in the A-Main and was cruising out front and looking set for his second win of the season when McFadden began to slowly make inroads. The last 10 laps were a thriller with J-Mac running the top line attacking Hirst as both maneuvered through lapped traffic. McFadden snatched the lead on several occasions, albeit briefly, but any hope of a win evaporated when a blown right-rear tyre tossed the #29 car into the wall between Turns 3 and 4 on the final lap.

On the subsequent restart, Hirst held the field back until the last possible moment then gassed up the #17 Monte Motorsport entry and romped away.

John Doig

QUOTE BOOK

BUZ WORDS

"The 360 was a bit of a side kick for us," explained Kyle Hirst's spanner man Kym Buswell. "We had the [360] car there and Luche wanted Kyle to run it. It worked out pretty well but our main focus was on the World Series round. Going with the harder tyre was the right call. I said to Kyle, 'Go for it.' I don't want my driver going around conserving tyres. There was not much left on it in the end. It didn't matter. We won."

ROUND AND ROUND

"I have been racing for 11 years and done a lot of races in that time and from memory it is the first time I have won two in one night," said the triathlon-fit Kyle Hirst. "I'm not sure how many laps I did, I think it was around a hundred. It is always fun to win and especially so in front of my team owner Luche Monte and his family."

BACK IN THE GAME

"We had good car speed all night," said an upbeat Jamie Veal. "The championship will go down to the wire. We got a few points

back from Brooke. It would have been good to win but Kyle just got away from the pack at the start."

BLEW IT

"I blew the right rear tyre; don't know why or how," stated James McFadden with a characteristic shrug of the shoulders. "The boys gave me an awesome car and I think we were good enough to win the race. This year we have been running second three times and had a rear tyre blow that has put us out of the race. When that happens you are not going to win a championship. It is what it is."

Cameron Kirby takes data from a GT3 car and a V8 Supercar for the ultimate technical comparison

GT VER



SUS V8



How does Mercedes' SLS AMG GT3 compare to the E63 AMG Supercar at Mount Panorama?

IT'S NO secret GT3 cars are faster than V8 Supercars, particularly at Bathurst. The fastest of our local touring cars to have lapped the mountain circuit – Jamie Whincup's 2:04.9097sec – is still nearly four seconds slower than Shane van Gisbergen's stonking 2:01.286 pole lap from this year's Bathurst 12 Hour. But while GT3s have the upper hand over one-lap, V8 Supercars remains the proverbial king of the hill, the Bathurst 1000 pulling in crowds that dwarf its 12-hour brother.

But putting popularity and tradition aside, how do these cars stack up? It's easy to look at the lap times and conclude that a GT3 car is quicker, but how is it quicker? *Auto Action* sought the hard data to show the where, what and why of how these two cars perform at Mount Panorama.

We called the good folks at Erebus Motorsport, who were kind enough to allow us access to data from the fastest laps of their SLS AMG GT3 weapon (which finished fifth in this year's Bathurst 12 Hour) and last year's E63 Mercedes Benz V8 Supercar (which finished 12th in last year's Bathurst 1000).

To help us better understand what all this info means we drafted in Erebus Motorsport V8 Supercar driver David Reynolds and engineering guru Erik Pender to explain. Pender currently works as an engineer for the Melbourne Performance Centre, engineering its fleet of Audi GT3 cars at both the Bathurst 12 Hour, and in the Australian GT Championship. He also has plenty of experience with V8 Supercars, previously

“The 12 Hour is a much different race to the Bathurst 1000”

DAVID REYNOLDS

performed engineering duties for Rick Kelly at Nissan Motorsport and Nick Percat at Lucas Dumbrell Motorsport. Oh, and he engineered Greg Murphy's infamous 'Lap of the Gods', so he's pretty handy on the tools.

Pender says the core differences between a GT3 and V8 Supercar is in the aero kit, which allows the GT3 cars to keep the go pedal stuck against the firewall for longer before and through corners.

Aside from one-lap cracks, Reynolds says the way the cars make use of their speed during their respective races is vastly different – despite both being considered 'endurance' events.

“In the 12 Hour you are not pushing that hard because it is 12 hours of racing and you are trying to manage fuel and get through traffic and stuff, it is a much different race [to the Bathurst 1000],” Reynolds says. “In the Bathurst 1000 you are putting in qualifying laps for six hours almost. It takes it out of you, especially in a car like that across the top and down the hill; it always feels like you are going to have an accident.”

BATHURST

QUALIFYING LAP TIMES

GT3: 2:02.5360sec

V8SC: 2:06.9696sec



SPLIT

WITH THE data provided to us by Erebus we were able to trace out the speed and gear of each car at the key points around the track.

The first thing you may notice is the way the GT3 car dominates a V8 Supercar through corners. Even at the relatively slow-speed Hell Corner, the GT3 carries more speed. But the V8 Supercar has all the aces when it comes to straight-line speed, especially on Mount Panorama's Mountain Straight and the full-throttle epic that is Conrod.

"What [the V8 Supercar] lacks in downforce, you would make up for in grunt – you end up arriving quite quickly at the corners," says Erik Pender.

The top of the mountain, and fearsome corners like McPhillamy and Reid Park, Skyline, and The Dipper, highlight just how good the GT3 aero package is. But while aero is often touted as the chief reason for GT3s speed advantage, Pender says tyres also play a vital role.

"The V8 Supercar uses a much narrower tyre and that is where it all starts," he explains. "The tyre is linking the car to the road and the GT3 car runs on a bigger, probably racier tyre."

"The Dunlop for the V8 Supercars is built to do a job, and it does that job well, but it is driver limited. The drivers have to be careful on it and look after it. The car has got a lot of horsepower and a lot of the weight, and the tyre is right on the edge of handling all that. To make a V8 Supercar faster the first thing you would do is put different rubber on it."

Reynolds got his first taste of driving the SLS AMG GT3 at last month's Bathurst 12 Hour and says the difference between that and his regular drive are drastic.

"You have got really good tyre quality in the SLS, so the corner speeds are up and it doesn't feel like you are going to crash all the time," he says. "And it has ABS and traction control so you can brake a lot later. You feel a lot more in control because the cars are very well set-up and the tyres are very good. It has more aero as well, so for me it is a much nicer car to drive."

KEY

- GT3 SPEED KM/H
- GT3 GEAR
- V8SC SPEED KM/H
- V8SC GEAR

SPEC SHEET

E63 AMG Mercedes

Engine: 5.0-litre M159 V8
Power: 635+bhp (estimated)
Fuel Capacity: 112 litres
Transmission: Six-speed sequential transaxle with integrated spool differential
Suspension: Double wishbone with adjustable damper and cockpit adjustable front anti-roll bar (front); Control independent suspension with adjustable damper and cockpit adjustable rear anti-rollbar (rear)
Tyres: 280/680 – 18in (front and rear)
Weight: 1410kg (with driver)



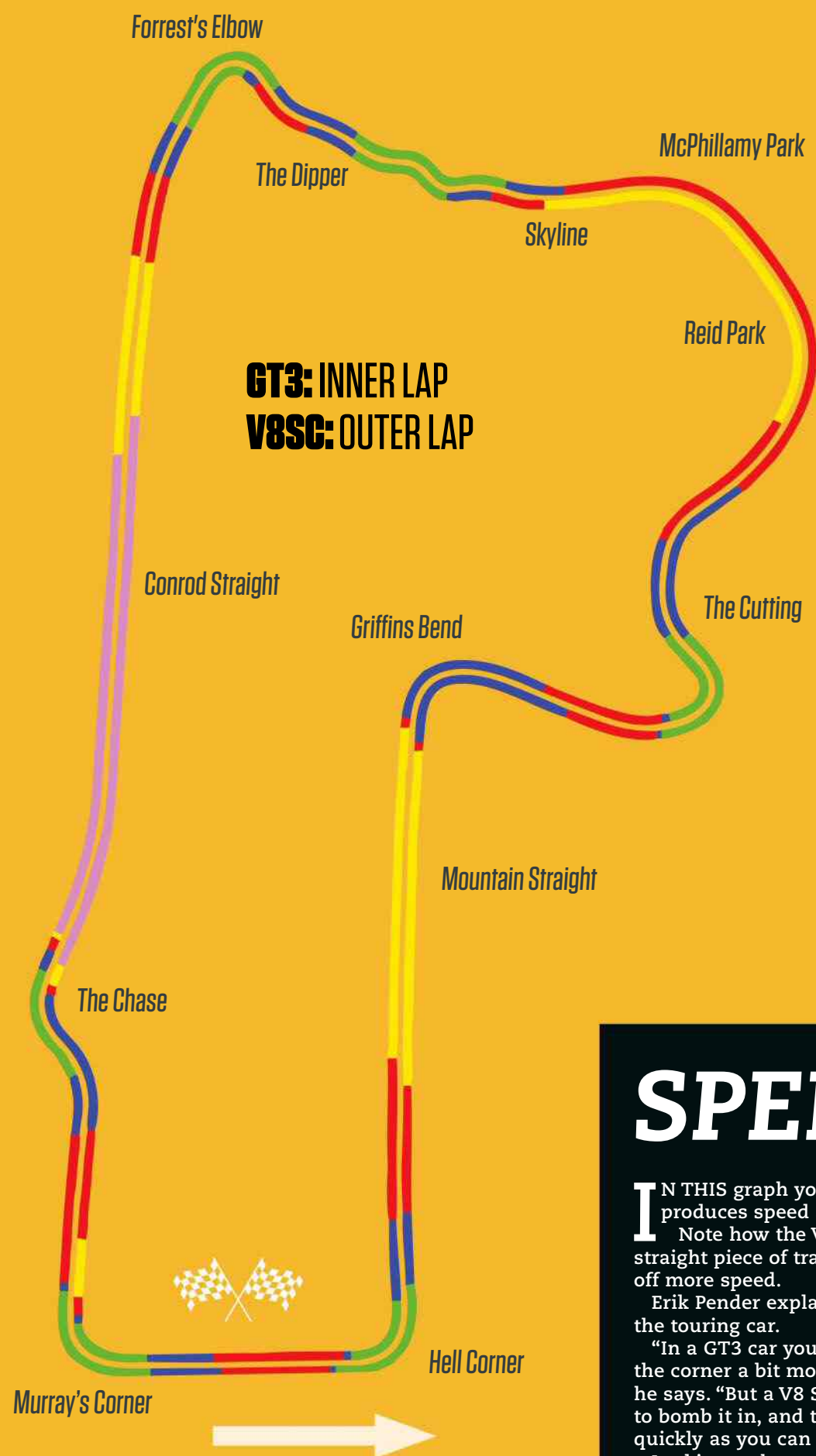
SLS AMG GT3 Mercedes

Engine: 6.2-litre DOHC V8
Power: 500bhp (approx.)
Fuel Capacity: 120 litres
Transmission: Six-speed sequential transmission in transaxle configuration with multi-disc, limited-slip differential and traction control
Suspension: Adjustable suspension with double wishbones front and rear and modified axle; kinematics
Tyres: 300/680 – 18in (front); 310/710 – 18in (rear)
Weight: 1320kg (no driver)



Dave Reynolds understands both beasts

THROUGH THE GEARS



TO DEMONSTRATE how much easier it is to brake in a GT3 car we laid out exactly what gear each car is in at each point. This data allows us to identify two things – how much later the GT3 car gets on the anchors, and how much earlier it gets back on the gas than the V8 Supercar. Impressively, although the V8 Supercar gets back on the throttle and up through the gears later than the GT3, it still has the grunt to overhaul it on the straights.

For the drivers, these braking zones are one area that requires the biggest adjustment.

“In the SLS the braking traces are almost like a square, it is either on or off,” says David Reynolds. “Whereas the Supercar, you are braking really hard and trying to manage locking, and trying to trail into the corner and manage your front grip. It is almost like you are driving in the wet the entire time.”

The extra straight-line speed of the V8 Supercar adds a further element of complexity to a car that doesn’t have the luxury of ABS like the SLS.

“You have to brake earlier,” Reynolds explains. “Even though we are approaching the corner faster at some corners, we are going through the corners slower, so the braking distance is more, and it is a lot harder to judge because the tyre doesn’t give you the feedback and it doesn’t give you as much grip.”

At the end of the day, there are fundamental differences in the way the cars are constructed and what they are intended to do on a racetrack, which means comparisons like this one are more for intrigue and entertainment’s sake than anything else.

Pender puts it best with this succinct assessment: “In the end, a V8 Supercar is a touring car and a GT3 car is a GT car.”

KEY

- 6TH GEAR
- 5TH GEAR
- 4TH GEAR
- 3RD GEAR
- 2ND GEAR
- 1ST GEAR

SPEED GRAPH

IN THIS graph you can see the differences in how each car produces speed around Mount Panorama.

Note how the V8 Supercar gains speed on the GT3 at every straight piece of track but is then forced to brake earlier and scrub off more speed.

Erik Pender explains this is due to the ‘point and squirt’ nature of the touring car.

“In a GT3 car you can carry mid-corner speed, so it lets you flow the corner a bit more traditionally, like a traditional racing car,” he says. “But a V8 Supercar with the spool and all that, you tend to bomb it in, and then get it rotated, then get on the throttle as quickly as you can to make use of the horsepower.”

Looking at the speed across the top of the Mountain, the GT3 car is smoother, having to brake less thanks to its superior aero package.

KILOMETRES PER HOUR



Supercars lose the most speed down through The Esses



The GT3 lacks the straight-line speed of the V8SC

ENGINEERING AT PACE

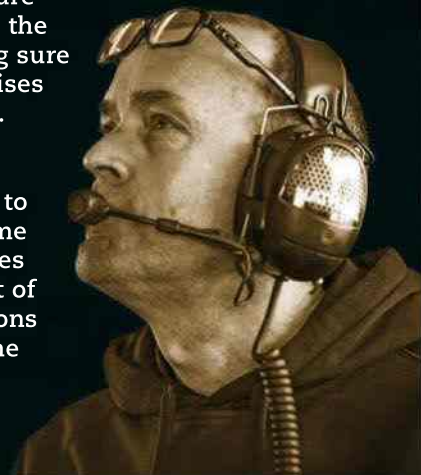
DISCOVERING HOW the cars make a fast lap happen on track is fascinating, but the real magic happens before a driver even puts on his race suit. No lap record would be possible without the work of an engineer who sets the car up.

Having handed Greg Murphy the car that allowed him to produce the Lap of the Gods, Erik Pender knows a thing or two about preparing a car for Mount Panorama.

Pender says it isn't just drivers that notice differences on the cars, with engineers also having to adapt their styles between the two beasts.

"The thing to remember is the GT3 car is homologated, so everything on it technically – nuts, bolts, all that – is set by the homologation papers, whereas the V8 Supercar you are working to a set of rules but always developing," he explains. "In the current V8 Supercar, for example, the front suspension is still free within the pick-up point areas, so you are always mucking around with upright design and things like that, whereas the GT3 car is set by the manufacturer, and that is what you have got."

"The geometry and things you can't really change, so your focus is more like the old days when there wasn't a lot of data, you are just working with the driver and making sure the driver maximises himself in the car. Whereas a V8 Supercar you are always still going to the track with some new bits and pieces on the car, so part of the practice sessions is about testing the car as well as the driver learning to drive it."



THE ONE



McLeod's most recent outing was at the 2016 Bathurst 12 Hour



His hi-tech transporter has been around Australia



Gerard McLeod is quite possibly the hardest working man in motorsport, writes Rob Margeit

THIS STORY is not about Formula 1 or V8 Supercars or any of the myriad top-level professional categories where the drivers are household names and the business of motor racing stretches into untold millions of dollars. It's not about superstar drivers on large salaries immersed in public adulation who is just an extension of the army of people at the factory and in the pits, all with specific responsibilities to make a racecar go faster.

No, this story isn't about them. It's a story about V8 Ute racer Gerard McLeod, quite possibly the hardest working man in motorsport.

McLeod finished third in last year's V8 Utes Series behind established stars Ryal Harris and Kris Walton who between them have won the last four titles. What makes McLeod's achievement more remarkable is the way he achieved the result.

McLeod is a one-man band. He is the driver,

team manager, chief mechanic, truck driver. He engineers the car and he books his travel. He is the media manager and the commercial manager, sending out press releases and pitching proposals to sponsors. And remarkably, he also has a day job at a V8 Supercar team.

It's not unusual for him to finish a Ute race, park the car, sprint down pitlane and take up his role with Lucas Dumbrell Motorsport, where he dovetails his Monday-to-Friday office job as Purchasing Officer with his weekend work as the 'spike'.

McLeod was destined for a motorsport career. His father, Peter, was a regular in the ATCC in the 1980s, racing his Slick 50 Mazda RX-7 with success, culminating with his victory in the 1983 Australian Endurance Championship. But it's on Australia's biggest motorsport stage where McLeod senior enjoyed his greatest triumph, winning the 1987

Bathurst 1000 with Peter Brock and David 'Skippy' Parsons. For the now 32-year-old Gerard, his Dad's Bathurst win remains his first memory.

"[Motorsport is] all I know as far as I can remember, it's just been racecars," he says. "One of the first things I can remember is standing under the podium in '87 when Dad won Bathurst."

"I kicked around the back of the pits when I was a kid and when I was old enough I picked up a spanner and worked on the cars. And I've done that ever since."

That simple statement belies a very real determination to succeed in motorsport. Given his first kart at age 15, McLeod got his first taste of how his career would pan out.

"I had my first kart bought for me and that was it. Dad was teaching me the way of hard knocks. He said, 'Here's a kart, now fend for yourself. You've got to fund it, you've got to rebuild it.'"

It's a philosophy that would serve McLeod well in future years when he decided to get serious about driving. But before reaching that point in 2012, he built a career in motorsport behind the scenes.

"I got caught up preparing cars at the end of Dad's career, when Dad and [brother] Ryan were racing at Bathurst in the [mid-1990s] I was working on the cars," he explains. "Then as Ryan kept



progressing through his racing, I worked on all his cars. Then I started working with teams like John Faulkner... always building cars. I've done it at a pretty high level since I was a kid. So the driving took a backward step.

"It was probably when I was working for the Zukanovics in 2010 and 2011. At that point I'd been nine years full-time in V8 Supercars. I'd worked for Britek, Paul Morris Motorsports, I did some stuff for Walkinshaw and, you know, done a lot of work. I sat there going: 'I've got to the high of my career as a technician; I'm not really learning anything anymore'. I sat down one day and asked: 'Why am I doing this?'"

"So I quit my job at the Zukanovics and filled out an entry form for the 2012 V8 Ute series and then said: 'I'm gonna be on the grid'... and I made it happen!"

Four years later, McLeod enjoyed a break-out season in 2015, notching up his first race and round wins en route to third in the championship. And he did it largely single-handedly with only a couple of mates helping out on race weekends.

"The Ute lives in my one-car garage at my apartment. I work on it myself, I do all the mechanical work, I do the engineering, I do the logistics, I book my flights, I do the artwork on the car, I apply the signwriting, I do every single thing,"

he says. "The only time I have help is at race meetings when two mates who've always helped me out. One runs a radio and the other one runs a spanner while I'm in the car and even then, I'm still directing everything.

"I grew up envying kids who'd get out of their kart at the kart track and ride around on pushbikes while their dads worked on the kart. And even more so now, I envy the drivers who at the end of a race meeting can stand there and watch the truck get packed and say, 'Well, where do we race next?'"

"I'm fighting against those kinds of people to

"The Ute lives in my one-car garage at my apartment. I work on it myself"

GERARD MCLEOD

prove I can make it in an industry that is very money orientated. It's quite tough at times but I think if you're passionate and you're driven, you can make it work.

"One of the most rewarding things in my whole career was when I won my first round at Sandown. I had the Erebus drivers and a couple of other drivers standing outside their pits watching their Pantech trucks get loaded with multiple staff running around while I single-handedly packed my trailer on the back of my Mazda in front of them with the winners' trophy on the back lid of the Ute and drove out the gate. That was probably my most pleasing achievement because I did it all by myself... I'm sure they were looking over going, 'That guy with a tandem trailer, a toolbox and tyre pressure gauge just flogged us all weekend'."

Now McLeod is looking to expand his CV. He's unlikely to return to the V8 Utes series and is instead, eyeing a switch to GT racing. While nothing has been locked in, he is confident of securing a seat in what is rapidly becoming one of Australia's fastest growing categories. And if he does, maybe he can finally relax and just drive the damn car! 🏁

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Sheehan had the least wounded car at the finish

Sheehan and Cannuli star out West

The Thunder 400 round at the Perth Motorplex brought out the best in some, reports John Doig

SANDGROPER MARK Sheehan scored his first win in Top Fuel since 2013 after defeating Rapisarda Autosport International star Wayne Newby in the final of Top Fuel at Perth Motorplex where the lowly car count of four was compensated for by several outstanding performances and 520km/h plus passes.

Top Alcohol, for so long the orphan class in the Pro ranks, has been the revelation of the 2015-16 season and produced a slew of world class runs over the weekend with John Cannuli taking the win over fellow Queenslander Gary Phillips.

Four-time champ Darren Morgan clocked a 4.77/504km/h to claim pole in Top Fuel while RAI teammates Damien Harris and Wayne Newby were slated to face one another in first round after

qualifying second and third, respectively.

There were equal bragging rights in the RAI camp. Harris with a 4.772sec was quicker by 0.006sec, and Newby at 495km/h was faster by 3km/h.

Sheehan detonated a run on his second qualifier and was well off the pace with a best run of 5.26/303km/h.

Round one produced a massive shock when underdog Sheehan jumped Morgan on the start and led all the way, stopping the timers with a jaw-dropping pass of 4.59sec at 526km/h. Morgan was far from disgraced with a 4.77/484km/h.

The eagerly anticipated duel between Newby and Harris was over in an instant after Harris cut a red light.

In the final, Newby grabbed the lead and was headed for victory until he

appeared to drop a cylinder. Sheehan also had his hands full after torching the engine near half-track but was able to coast to the line first.

Gary Phillips shredded the Australian Top Alcohol record with a 5.36/434km/h, the second quickest time in Alky history, to lead the eight-car field. John Cannuli secured second place with a PB of 5.37/429km/h. On race day, both parties easily advanced through two rounds of eliminations to set up a mega final round showdown.

The final, however, was an anti-climax. Phillips went up in smoke on the hit and handed the win to Cannuli. A disappointing end to some of the best Alky racing in the 16-year history of the 'Plex.

CRAMPTON THROUGH TO SEMI-FINALS

AUSSIE RICHIE Crampton's 2016 NHRA Top Fuel campaign got off to a low-key start with a narrow semi-final loss to Texan Steve Torrence in the opening round of the season, the 56th Winternationals at Pomona Raceway, California. Torrence then defeated veteran Doug Kalitta to claim his first Top Fuel win since Denver in July 2015.

"It's for sure the way we want to start off the 2016 season," Crampton said. "We

struggled a lot in testing at Phoenix with a couple of gremlins and they followed us here to Pomona. We were working through those all day long. To get as far as we did is a credit to the guys."

The three-car squad of Don Schumacher Racing struggled. Reigning champ Antron Brown dusted teammate Shawn Langdon in round one then lost to Kalitta.

Budget racer Terry McMillan is an early favourite for the 2016 giant killer of the

year award after driving around Tony Schumacher in first round.

Ron Capps's quest to win his first Funny Car title since making his debut in the category in 1997 is off to a strong start after he took the win over reigning champ Del Worsham.

Pro Stock racing – running for the first time since a raft of changes including the introduction of fuel injection, a rev limiter and the removal of engine scoops – was dominated by the Summit Racing duo Greg Anderson and Jason Line. Top qualifier Anderson defeated his teammate on a holeshot in the final. **John Doig**

SPARE PARTS

MARK MY WORDS

Mark Sheehan, after overpowering the track in qualifying, 'calmed' the car on race day and revealed that he threw a rod going over the finish line against Morgan in round one. "Running under 4.60 is a great milestone and our next target is a low-4.50 pass, hopefully at the next meeting in March," he said.

HARKER NOT DONE

Expat Steve Harker, the 2014 NHRA Alcohol Funny Car champ, was spotted working on Gary Phillips's car. He has shelved retirement plans and will run a limited NHRA program this season.

QUANTUM LEAP

"It's a quantum leap," said Phillips, describing his record-breaking pass of 5.37sec. "I certainly left something there on the table. There's probably a couple of hundredths that I gave away on that run. The world record is a 5.36 and that's what we're aiming for."

PREP FOR SUCCESS

"Most of the hard work is done in the shed," said Darren Morgan on his recipe for success. "We work at making sure that everything is right before we come out to the racetrack."

GOING LOWER

"We went into the meeting with a best of 5.42sec so to come away with the win and a new ET of 5.37, the third fastest in the world, is a great reward for our team," said John Cannuli.

RED FACED

"We got down the track on every run except for the final," lamented Wayne Newby. "I ran a red. I can't remember the last time that happened. I feel I let the team down," according to Harris. **JD**

STATEWIDE

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Ackland led from the front upon his return

Ack back with a vengeance

OPEN-WHEELERS RULED at round two of the Victorian Hillclimb Championship at Bryant Park on February 13.

Greg Ackland returned from 18 months away and set the pace in his Ninja GA8 on every pass. The former champion, who plans to contest the rest of the season, showed he had lost none of his skill as he finished with a best of 46.58sec on the long clockwise track. He was three and a half seconds ahead of current champion Garry Martin, who struggled with new tyre grip in the GAK Martin he shares with Andrew Mizzi, who finished eighth.

Third outright went to Peter Weichard in his Dallara, half a second behind Martin. The Minahan brothers finished fourth and sixth in their shared Hayward 07 with Peter having the edge over Bruce. They were split by South Australian David Mahon's ex-Ackland Ninja GA7.

Ninth-placed Wim Janssen (Supersports Radical) was the only non-open wheeler in the top 10. Fred Galli (SYGA-CGA) completed the top 10 and won the over 2.0-litre Formula Libre class.

Experience won over youthful exuberance with Wesley Inkster finishing just one second ahead of

his son Tom in their Spectrum Formula Ford. Max Bonney was the quickest in his family's Formula Vee, 14th outright and well ahead of the younger team members.

An open-wheeler also topped the historic classes, with Steve Hill (Hawke Formula Ford) finishing ahead of Mark Atkinson (Falkenberg Jinx) and Shane Bolger (Bedmore Special). Jim McNiven (Toyota Sprinter) was 17th outright and well off his own class record, while Glen Latter (Mazda RX-7) evened the round one score with Ian Holdsworth's RX-7 in the over 2.0-litre Sports Cars. **Gary Hill**

M1 leads Classic celebration

ARARE and desirable 1979 BMW M1 Procar will race at the Phillip Island Classic Festival of Motorsport on March 11-13 as part of the manufacturer's 100th birthday.

The sleek six-cylinder silver coupe will be driven by Chris Bowden in Group Q & R for 'big banger' sports cars that includes five McLarens and seven Lolas, plus a V8-engined Elfin 360 Repco-Brabham.

Identically race-prepared M1s supported rounds of the F1 World Championship and featured many drivers from F1, sports and touring cars.

The 1979 championship was won by Niki Lauda. In 1980 Nelson Piquet won from Alan Jones.

With no series in 1981, the M1 was eligible to race in Group 4, and compete in the World Endurance Championship.

The car destined for PI (chassis #1077) was built in 1979 by now McLaren honcho Ron Dennis and spent most of the next five years racing in Japan, where it was converted to silhouette Group 5-spec, with wider, more aerodynamic and lighter bodywork.

From 1984 it was occasionally used in selected historic events, before the

Bowdens purchased it. The M1 was restored to its factory race guise while its original 3498cc M88/1 fuel injected six-cylinder engine was rebuilt in Japan.

This M1 is now eligible for FIA Historic events worldwide and will join 12 other BMWs (nine are ex-JPS Touring Cars) competing and more than 30 on display at Phillip Island.

Jim Richards, who won two Australian Touring Car titles (in 1985 and 1987), will race an ex-Team JPS BMW 635 coupe now owned by New Zealand enthusiast Peter Sturgeon in the Group C/A races.



The M1 will be among 13 BMWs racing

Gay for Pulsars

JOSH GAY is gearing up for his first season of competition in a full-sized car in the 2016 Winton Sprint Series. As recipient of the inaugural Winton Sprints Junior Scholarship for drivers aged 15 to 17, his entry fee for each round will be covered by Winton and the Benalla Auto Club.

Josh will drive a Mitsubishi Mirage at the first round but is planning to step into a newly-purchased Nissan Pulsar for the remainder of the series. His goal is to eventually compete in the Australian Pulsar Challenge.

Though still a teenager, Gay is no stranger to motorsport competition, having previously competed in motocross and karts.

The youngster also comes from a family with heavy involvement in motorsport. Father Richard was a former competitor in Commodore Cup and HQ Holden racing and was victorious in Winton's most prestigious HQ race, the Ken Leigh 4 Hour, which he won with Neville Haley in 2001.

Island influx

THE 27th PHILLIP Island Classic Festival of Motorsport on March 11-13 will boast over 500 cars and 58 races, three Formula 1 cars and 10 Can-Am cars from the USA.

Two famous F1 cars with Australian connections will be coming 'home' thanks to their current enthusiastic UK owners, Andrew and Margaret Wareing. One is the works 1.5-litre BRM P261-5 that was raced by Graham Hill, Ritchie Ginther and Jackie Stewart and later, factory-fitted with a 2.0-litre V8 and contested the 1965, 1966 and 1967 Tasman Championships with Stewart and Richard Attwood.

The Wareings are also bringing their famous Williams FW06 – the first car produced by the combination of Frank Williams and Patrick

Head for their Williams Grand Prix Engineering Formula 1 team. It was powered by a Cosworth DFV 3.0-litre V8 and driven by Alan Jones, it competed as a lone Williams works entry in all 16 rounds of the 1978 F1 World Championship.

At Phillip Island, the BRM P261-5 will compete in Group M & O where one of its main rivals will be the 1968 2.5-litre Repco Brabham V8 of Victorian Peter Strauss. The FW06/03 is in Q & R up against the 1971 March 741 to be raced by John Bowe and the 1985 ex-works Lola 1.5-litre turbo of Iain Ross.

The open-wheeler program will include a bumper field of Formula 5000s with 13 cars coming from New Zealand to take on 17 Australians.

SPARE PARTS

SO MUCH HERITAGE

Among the huge entry for the Phillip Island Classic will be Heritage Touring Cars, the Group C and A cars that contested the Australian Touring Car Championship from 1973 to 1992. Another 30 or more cars are again expected to come from the USA, Britain, Europe and New Zealand.

BEGA RETURNS

The popular Bega Valley Rally run on the Queen's Birthday long weekend in June will make a return to the Victorian Rally Championship, filling the void for the recently cancelled Marysville Stages round. The event will also coincide with a round of the New South Wales Rally Championship. **COB**

LAST WINNER FIRST

Ross Dunkerton has put in the first entry application for the Southern Cross Gold Anniversary Rally, which will be held from November 8-19 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first Southern Cross Rally. Dunkerton, a five-time Australian Rally Champion and winner of the final Southern Cross Rally in 1980, will have wife Lisa navigating. Other high profile entries are expected from rally legend Barry Ferguson, who won the Southern Cross in 1967 and 1970, and former Australian champions Dinta and Kate Officer.

SHUT UP SHOP

The Big W Distribution Centre in Monarto, South Australia is no longer available for motorsport use. CAMS SA and the SA Autotest Panel, along with all interested parties would like to pass on a huge thank you to Big W. In particular they thank Ken Birch, who selflessly contributed to motorsport being able to go ahead at the venue for the past decade. Competitors for any calendared events at Big W Monarto should contact the organising club or state office regarding a venue change. The CAMS Come and Try Day scheduled for February 28 there has been postponed.

Aussies off in the 'States



AN AUSTRALIAN team featuring the son and father pairing of Danny and Andy Brown along with fellow Victorian George Apted finished the BlueWater Resort Car Parker 425, which was run in Arizona, USA on February 5-6.

The event attracted 106 entries with the Aussie trio placing 46th outright and eighth in their class of 30.

They qualified their Chev V8-powered Alumi Craft in 24th overall (fourth in class) before Danny Brown took the wheel with Apted navigating for the first of three laps. After losing time replacing a broken wheel

trackside because the wheel jammed on the brake calliper, they were placed 24 minutes behind the race leader in 47th and fourth in class.

Brown senior stepped into the driver's seat for the second leg and despite alternator issues progressed to 32nd overall and 10th in class.

The younger Brown took over for the final leg but the alternator problems continued. They lost over an hour and a half, having changed four by race's end, and soldiered on to finish after midnight, 3hr35min33sec after the outright winners.

GNOO DO A BLAST

MORE THAN 500 cars and thousands of spectators turned out for the annual Gnoo Blas Classic Car Show. This year the Orange event was moved to February 13-14 to avoid a clash with the Bathurst 12 Hour.

The club keeps the history of the old road racing circuit alive in the central west NSW town, maintaining that it is an important part of motorsport history, built as a community project in 1953.

Australia's best drivers of the past competed there. Jack Brabham started his road racing career there and held the lap record up until the last meeting in 1961. Others included Bob Jane, Stan Jones, Peter Whitehead, Tony Gaze, Alex Mildren, Doug Whiteford, Tom Sulman, Leo and Ian Geoghegan, Des West, Arnold Glass, Max Stewart, Jack Myers and Len Lukey.

This year's event signified 60 years since the second South Pacific Road Racing Championships, on January 30,



20,000 spectators watched Alf Harvey win the 1956 South Pacific Road Racing Championships

1956. Special guest was Ron Tauranac, who, with Jack Brabham, founded the Brabham constructor and racing team, and Ralt, which raced in Formula Three, Formula Two and Formula Atlantic.

Among the other guests were Volvo

Supercar team owner Garry Rogers, 1956 event winner Reg Hunt, and Bill Buckle whose Buckle Coupe (which also made an appearance) once held every GT lap record on Australia's east coast, including Gnoo Blas.



PARK RACEWAY

MARCH CALENDAR

- 1st
Closed
- 2nd
Private Hire
- 3rd
Private Hire
- 4th
CAMS NSW State Championships
- 5th
CAMS NSW State Championships
- 6th
CAMS NSW State Championships
- 7th
Private Hire
- 8th
Closed
- 9th
Private Hire
- 10th
Speed off the Streets
- street cars only
- 11th
PR Tech
- 12th
Porsche Club
- 13th
Trackday Club
- 14th
Private Hire
- 15th
Closed
- 16th
Trackschool
- 17th
Speed off the Streets
- street cars only
- 18th
TBA
- 19th
Circuit Club
- 20th
BMW Club
- 21st
Test and Tune - race cars only
- 22th
Private Hire
- 23rd
Anglo Motorsport
- 24th
Closed
- 25th
Australian Superbike
Championship
- 26th
Australian Superbike
Championship
- 27th
Australian Superbike
Championship
- 28th
Closed
- 29th
Private Hire
- 30th
Private Hire
- 31st
Private Hire

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Don Holland did a bit of scrutineering before racing this Mazda to a Bathurst class victory

Waving the flag



HISTORICS

MAN OF THE AGES

Ray Bell

Some highly distinguished drivers first helped out in an official capacity

LOOKING THROUGH some old race programs the other day I came across some interesting names. There in the lists of officials I found people who would later be rather more famous than mere flag marshals or scrutineers.

In a Catalina Park program I found Arnold Ahrenfeld and Russell Kramer. The latter must have been pretty young as he was down as a 'runner' while Arnold was a Paddock Marshal.

In a Warwick Farm program I found John Smailes as a flaggie; John of course finding making much more of a name for himself later on racing his own Honda S600 and writing newspaper columns as well as being a part of a promotions company.

Neville Harlow – later to race and rally Volvos and build a wheel and tyre retail outlet – was in there as well, along with the less well-known Richard Longes. Richard would race a Mawer Clubman and later

have some nice Historic machinery.

Under the wrappings of scrutineer overalls there was Don Holland and Warren Gracie, both of whom raced tin-tops with Holland having quicker ones like the Toranas and being a frontrunner

“In the lists of officials I found people who would later be rather more famous than mere flag marshals or scrutineers”

RAY BELL

in a Mazda in the 3.0-litre days.

John Sexton was listed among Spectator Marshals, his racing efforts in Clubmans coming a few years later while he became a core member of the AARC in its declining years.

Stan de Teliga waved flags as well, and over a long period, too. I recall well meeting him on a flag point when I was doing the same years later. His racing claim to fame involved the utter destruction of an early Holden and some severe injuries to himself.

And in the pits at the Farm was, once again, Arnold Ahrenfeld. It's hard to ignore Arnold's racing career. He was instantly competitive when he drove his Lotus Super Seven in the mid '60s and was another to go for the tin-tops in the early '70s with an XU-1 which did very well for a private entry.

Later Arnold would climb much higher, running in the front rank in truck racing with a big Cummins diesel pushing his Kenworth along.

It says something for the enthusiasm of these budding drivers that they would put their time in on the sidelines helping make the meetings come together before they went on to bigger things.

FFord champ
Hill has tested a
USF2000 at GOTA



ROAD REMAINS OPEN

THE AUSTRALIAN Formula Ford Series will again be endorsed by Anderson Promotions and the Mazda Road To Indy, providing a pathway to give drivers recognition when heading to America.

For many Australians the United States has become a popular alternative to Europe when looking to land a career as a racecar driver. Last year's series winner, Cameron Hill,

tested at the Circuit of the Americas in a current-spec USF2000 and is working on securing a seat in the series, the first rung on the Road To Indy ladder.

The Formula Ford Association held a one-off stand-alone FF1600 (Kent engine) event at Bathurst last year and the two race winners are already furthering their careers.

Scott Andrews, who was part of

the SP Tools Lamborghini Gallardo that was an early retirement at the Bathurst 12 Hour, is targeting a year in US sportscars, while Jake Parsons is locked into a seat at Team Juncos in Pro Mazda.

A new Yokohama control tyre has been announced for the six-round local Formula Ford series, with improved safety in the tread pattern that disperses water more efficiently.

There will be controlled set of 'approved' ratios introduced to further reduce costs in clutch wear and gear ratio consumption in the Duratec cars. This is will not affect Kent-engined competitors.

Moohin's Moonshine

TEAMING UP in a Polaris XP 900, Peter Moohin and Joe Bugeja took outright and SuperLite honours in the inaugural Moonshine Run 180 on February 13-14. The duo finished eight seconds ahead of fellow Polaris pilots Brad and Geoff Hancock. Matt Gardiner and Andrew Spedding came in third at the helm of their Extreme 4WD Mitsubishi Pajero, a further 40 seconds behind.

Held at the Benaraby Motorsports

Complex, the event consisted of seven one-lap heats of the 14-kilometre course.

The Hancocks won the Prologue and led the first couple of laps before Moohin and Bugeja headed the field for the remainder. Fourth overall went to the Chev V8-powered Desert Dynamics of reigning North Queensland Pro Buggy title holder Rob Turner with Ron Griffith in the

navigator's seat.

In fifth was a Polaris RZR 1000 XP crewed by Wes Swafeld and Kath Champion, while Simon Levers driving solo in his Ausco Mc-lite was sixth outright and first in ProLite.

Stuart Chapman and Ross Challacombe (Mitsubishi Triton) won Performance 2WD and finished ninth overall, while Brad and Rod Hatch (Southern Cross/Toyota) won Super 1650 and finished 14th overall, one place and 31 seconds ahead of Production 4WD class winner Ethan Murray (Pajero).

WHAT'S ON NEAR YOU February 27-March 06

February 27	Tarmac Rally		Huon Valley	Tasmania
February 27	State Off Road Champs	1	Discovery Bay	Victoria
February 27-28	Summer Historics		Wakefield Park	New South Wales
February 27-28	State Hillclimb Series	1	Mt Cotton	Queensland
February 27-28	State Supersprint A Series	1	Morgan Park	Queensland
February 28	Champion Of Winton	1	Winton	Victoria
February 28	State Rallysprint Series	1	Coffs Harbour	New South Wales
March 05-06	Street Sprints		Gatton	Queensland

Winton MOTOR RACEWAY MARCH CALENDAR

4th

**Test and Tune
- Cars/Open-wheelers**

5-6th

**Victorian
Motor Racing
Championship
Round 1**

10th

**Test and Tune
- Cars/Open-wheelers**

11-13th

**24 Hours
of Lemons**

17th

**Test and Tune
- Cars/Open-wheelers**

19-20th

**Winton
Car Mania**

23rd

**Performance Test
Day
- SEDANS ONLY**

24th

**Test and Tune
- Cars/Open-wheelers**

31st

**Test and Tune
- MOTORCYCLES
ONLY**

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FAST FIVE



AARON CAMERON

Meet KZ hopeful and DPE recruit, Aaron Cameron

How did you get involved in karts?

My family has a few historic racing cars and Dad insisted I cut my teeth in karting. We went to Oakleigh Go Kart Club to watch and that next Monday I had a new Arrow Kart in the garage!

What is the best thing about racing karts?

Meeting so many young talented kids who some day will be in highest levels of motorsport.

Who are some drivers that you admire?

David Sera, Gary Carlton, Jordan Lennox-Lamb and Bas Lammers.

What has been your most memorable race?

The Queensland state titles in Junior National Light where I raced Will Brown and Benito Montalbano hard over the last couple laps. To cross that line first against them was awesome.

What are your goals for 2016?

To be competitive in KZ. I will be racing with DPE Kart Technology and can't wait to learn as much as I can off David Sera and Darren Hossack. I would also like to do some European racing and we are looking at the German DKM series because I got a podium there last year... and Dad likes the food!



Ensbey was in too much pain to compete in Dubbo

ENSBEY TO GUT IT OUT

KZ2 driver Kyle Ensbey is determined to make every post a winner after round-one setback

CRG AUSTRALIA'S Kyle Ensbey is determined to make amends for missing the opening round of the Australian Kart Championship in Dubbo due to a freak injury sustained several days prior.

"I'd felt that I'd injured myself lifting some things at home a few days before Dubbo but didn't know how serious it was until I got in the kart during practice on Friday," said Ensbey. "I was in that much pain I could only do a handful of laps in each session before the pain became unbearable and I had to come in. We tried a few different

things to make it easier on my body but after qualifying I was left with no option but to withdraw.

"I've never withdrawn from an event in my life. I've raced with broken ribs and all sorts of other niggling injuries but this was just too much to handle."

After returning to Queensland it was discovered that a torn stomach muscle was the cause of Ensbey's pain. While he's now on the bottom of the KZ2 points table, Ensbey says the setback has made him hungrier than ever for success.

"I've finished inside the top three in three of the past four years and every

time I've had a shocker of a round somewhere in there," he said. "I will take the Dubbo round as my shocker and have to make every post a winner from here on in.

"The guys at CRG have been a great support to me and I owe it to them to put in the best effort possible over the remaining rounds and help climb back."

Ensbey will give his body as much time as possible to heal before beginning preparations for the next round of the championship late next month in Puckapunyal, Victoria.

Frank Joseph

Fightback for Farley trophy

YOUNG GUN Chris Bregonje overcame a disappointing qualifying effort to outgun a strong field in the 10th annual Brian Farley Memorial at Eastern Creek on February 14.

Bregonje found his way to the front in the reverse-top 15 heat three before lining up fifth for the main event. Thomas Macdonald led the early running in the final ahead of Matthew Lopino before Bregonje took

over the lead at mid-race distance. Despite MacDonald's best efforts late in the race he was unable to stop Bregonje from etching his name on the trophy.

In his first appearance since last year's event, Farley's son, Troy, was one of the pace-setters early in the weekend before exiting the opening heat via a spectacular rollover.

Scuderia PCR driver Benito Montalbano continued his strong run in the KA4 Junior Light class to lead home teammate Jackson Souslin-Harlow. William Seal was victorious in Cadet 12. Other wins went to Alex Ninovic (Cadet 9), Jordan Giannopoulos (KA4 Junior Heavy), Kody Garland (KA3 Senior Light), Robert Seton (KA3 Senior Heavy), Michael Schiller (Restricted 125 Masters Light), Chris Nobbs (Restricted 125 Masters Light), Michael Osmond (TaG 125 Heavy), Kyle Sandona (TaG Restricted Light), Daniel Seraglio (TaG Restricted Heavy), Zachary Heard (KA3 Junior) and Reece Cochen (Junior Max). **Frank Joseph**

TRIVIA

1/ 2011 2/ David Brabham (2009) 3/ Twice (2011, 2014) 4/ 2008-09 5/ Paul Tracy (2003) 6/ Six (2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012) 7/ 2004 8/ Markko Märtin 9/ 2013 10/ Fifth

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This high impact auto-darkening welding and grinding helmet is ideal for MMA, MIG/MAG, and TIG welding. It's variable shade filter lens of shade 9-13 has a fast switching time – light to dark in 0.3 ms. This comfortable helmet is fully standards compliant and fits optional magnifying lenses. It comes with a two year conditional warranty.

Part No. WGWH04



\$706⁸⁷

\$642⁶¹

Exc.
GST

Smootharc MIG 180

- Light to medium industrial, maintenance and DIY jobs
- Inverter-based welding machine
- Simplified settings, semi-synergic control
- Generator requirement: 9 kVa

Package consists of:

- Power source
- Work return lead
- Binzel MB15AK MIG/MAG torch
- Gas hose
- Regulator
- Operating manual

Part No. BOC180MIG

**OUT
NOW!**

Plus more great specials for Automotive, General Fabrication & Plumbing Industries in our February - March 2016 catalogue. Go instore or online to get your copy!



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Prices valid until March 31st, 2016 or while stocks last. Sorry, no rainchecks.
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